J. E. HORAN
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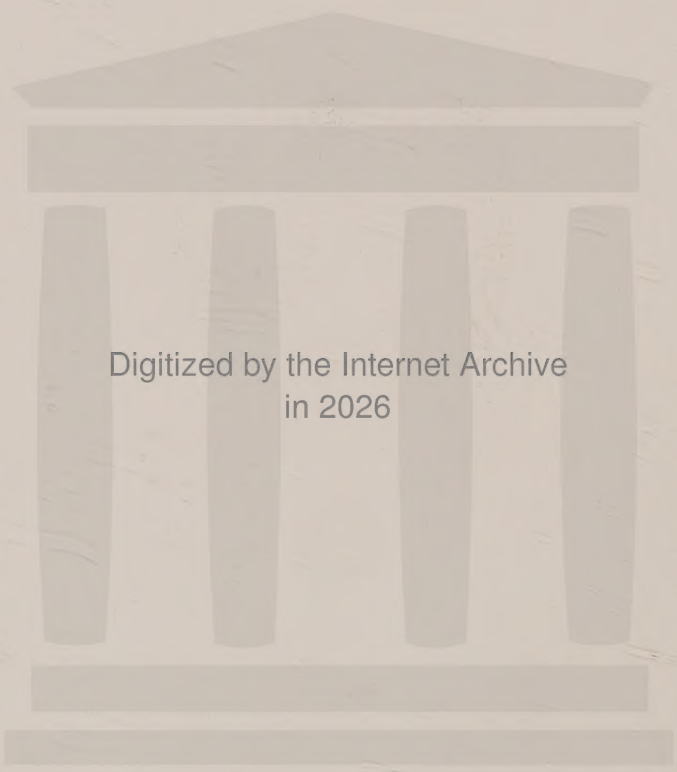
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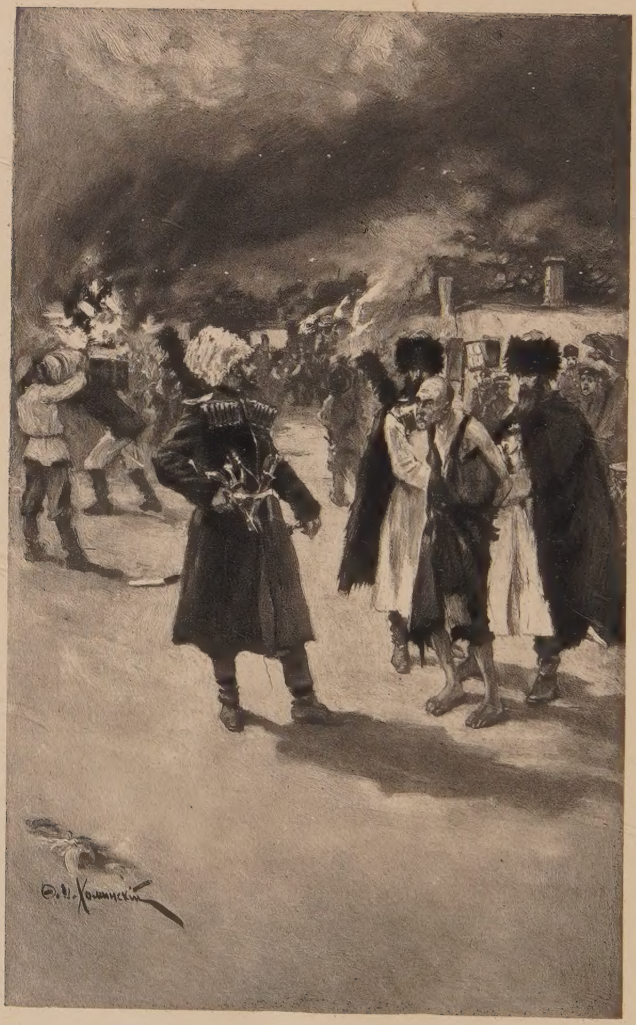
LYOF N. TOLSTOÏ

XII

THE INVADERS

AND OTHER STORIES



THE NOVELS AND OTHER WORKS OF

LYOF N. TOLSTOÏ

THE INVADERS

AND OTHER STORIES

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1899

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INTRODUCTION

OF the half-dozen stories or narratives comprising the present volume, three are directly inspired by Count Tolstoï's experience as a yunker serving in the Caucasus in the early fifties. While they give vivid pictures of the adventurous life led by the Russian soldier in his expeditions against the warlike mountaineers, description is not introduced for its own sake, but to furnish a realistic background or environment in which to place the human beings in whose thoughts, feelings, and personality, in whose relation to other men and to God and death, the author has always taken a deeper interest than in the dramatic evolution of a plot. They are like portraits in which the persons depicted occupy the foreground, and the accessories, though beautiful and suggestive, do not distract attention from the purpose of the painting.

The Russian novelists have always been fain to describe types rather than individual characters. In these stories there is nothing to indicate that the imagination of the author consciously or unconsciously clothed a virtue or a vice with human lineaments. The various officers and men may possibly be recognized as typical; one would feel sure that out of every regiment some such man or men would be found. The military training puts, on the outside at least, the marks of the stern mold. But they are live men and not masks. Realism triumphs in these vivid pen-pictures; the author must have met them, known them, entered into their hearts and souls.

It is reporting rather than creating — reporting so accurately that, as in everything else of Tolstoï's, you echo the sentiment, "This is life." Weaknesses and

foibles, show and sham, simple, undemonstrative courage, gay recklessness, unrewarded, uncomplaining devotion, the awful, degrading passion of gambling, are seen displayed by the comrades who go out to fight the Cherkess in the wild mountain gorges amid the dangerous forests of the *Kapkas!* And Death, which occupies Count Tolstoï more than any other great novelist, appears as the foil against which the superabundant life of man and beast is always contrasted — Death, which cuts down the flower of the army, made the crowning episode, but not the climax. The climax is the life which goes on just the same, after as before, with all its pettinesses and details.

In spite of a certain episodic scrappiness, inevitable where not one but several characters are picked out for delineation and contrast, these narratives hold the attention with wonderful tenacity: they are so vivid, so vital, so true; they make, as it were, a part of the history of man. The same vagueness, but also the same atmosphere of reality, are seen in the story entitled "*Metyol*," or the "Snowstorm." Here various phases of peasant character, as displayed by the *yamshchiks*, or postilions of the steppe, are shown in the nebulous thickness of a Russian blizzard, where courage and devotion and constancy and intelligence are required in the battle with cold and death.

"Polikushka" is a far more intense, consistent, and dramatic production. The interest is here concentrated on the tragic *finale* of the poor, weak, yet heroic peasant whose victory over himself ends so pitifully in suicide. Yet even here there is a foil; the end of Polikushka does not end the tale; it has its reflex action in the hard-won conquest of Dutlof's miserliness. Like "Anna Karenina," it is a double story.

"Kholstomer" is a Russian "Black Beauty." The horse tells his experiences with an eloquence which only one who had entered into the very soul of a horse could have caught. This, too, like the life of Polikushka, has a tragic *dénouement.* The racer, so proud of his strength, his swiftness, his beauty, his pedigree, goes

through the descending gamut of degradation till at last he becomes the prey of the knacker and the wolves! Yet in his death and his degradation he is not such a dead loss to the community as his former owner, who, likewise come to naught, is buried in the tomb of his ancestors.

Count Tolstoï, as it were, only shows his hand in these stories; they give a foretaste of greater things to come. They are the vastly interesting and characteristic forerunners of his masterpieces. But even if he had done nothing else, they would stand by themselves as works of genuine genius.

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THE INVADERS[1]

A VOLUNTEER'S NARRATIVE

CHAPTER I

ON the 24th of July, Captain Khlopof, in epaulets and cap, — a style of dress in which I had not seen him since my arrival in the Caucasus, — entered the low door of my earth hut.

"I 'm just from the colonel's," he said in reply to my questioning look; "to-morrow our battalion is to move."

"Where?" I asked.

"To N——. The troops have been ordered to muster at that place."

"And probably some expedition will be made from there?"

"Of course."

"In what direction, think you?"

"What do I think? I tell you I know. Last night a Tartar from the general came galloping up, — brought orders for the battalion to march, taking two days' rations. But whither, why, how long, is n't for them to ask. Orders are to go — that 's enough."

"Still, if they are going to take only two days' rations, it 's likely the army will not stay longer."

"That 's no argument at all."

"And how is that?" I asked, with astonishment.

"This is the way of it: When they went against Dargi they took a week's rations, but they spent almost a month."

[1] *Nabeg* (pronounced Na-be-ukh), the Invasion or Raid.

"And may I go with you?" I asked, after a short silence.

"Yes, you *may;* but my advice is — better not go. Why run the risk?"....

"No, allow me to disregard your advice. I have been spending a whole month here for this very purpose, — of having a chance to see action, — and you want me to let it have the go-by!"

"All right, come with us; only is n't it a fact it would be better for you to stay behind? You might wait for us here; you might go hunting. But as to us, — God knows what will become of us!.... And it would be glorious," he said in such a convincing tone that it seemed to me at the first moment that it would actually be glorious. Nevertheless, I said resolutely that I would n't stay behind for anything.

"And what would you see there?" pursued the captain, still trying to dissuade me. "If you want to learn how battles are fought, read Mikhaïlovsky-Danilevski's 'Description of War,' a charming book; there it 's all admirably described, — where every corps stands, and how battles are fought."

"On the contrary, that does not interest me," I replied.

"Well, now, how is this? It simply means that you want to see how men kill one another, does n't it?.... Here in 1832 there was a man like yourself, not in the regular service, — a Spaniard, I think he was. He went on two expeditions with us, ... in a blue mantle or something of the sort, and so the young fellow was killed. Here, batyushka, one is not surprised at anything."

Ashamed as I was that the captain gave such a poor interpretation of my motives, I did not attempt to argue him down.

"Well, he was brave, was n't he?" I asked.

"God knows as to that. He always used to ride at the front. Wherever there was firing, there he was."

"So he must have been brave, then," said I.

"No, it does n't signify bravery, — to put one's self where one is n't called."

"What do you call bravery, then?"

"Bravery, bravery?" repeated the captain, with the expression of a man to whom such a question presents itself for the first time. "*A brave man is one who conducts himself as he ought*," said he, after a brief consideration.

I remembered that Plato defined bravery as *the knowledge of what one ought and what one ought not to fear;* and in spite of the triteness and obscurity in the captain's definition, I thought the fundamental conception of both was not so unlike as might at first sight appear; and that the captain's definition was even more correct than the Greek philosopher's, for the reason that, if he could have expressed himself as Plato did, he would in all probability have said that that man is brave who fears only what he ought to fear and not what there is no need of fearing.

I was anxious to explain my thought to the captain.

"Yes," I said, "it seems to me that in every peril there is an alternative, and the alternative adopted under the influence of, say, the sentiment of duty, is bravery, but the alternative adopted under the influence of a lower sentiment is cowardice; therefore it is impossible to call a man brave who risks his life out of vanity or curiosity or greediness, and, *vice versa*, the man who under the influence of the virtuous sentiment of family obligation, or simply from conviction, avoids peril, cannot be called a coward."

The captain looked at me with a queer sort of expression while I was talking.

"Well, now, I don't know how to reason this out with you," said he, filling his pipe; "but we have with us a yunker, and he likes to philosophize. You talk with him. He also writes poetry."

I had only become intimate with the captain in the Caucasus, but I had known him before in Russia. His mother, Marya Ivanova Khlopova, the owner of a small

landed estate, lives about two versts[1] from my home. Before I went to the Caucasus I visited her. The old lady was greatly delighted that I was going to see her Pashenka[2] (thus she called the old gray-haired captain) and, like a living letter, could tell him about her circumstances and give him a little message. Having made me eat my fill of a glorious pie and roast chicken, Marya Ivanova went to her sleeping-room and came back with a rather large black relic-bag,[3] to which was attached a silken ribbon.

"Here is this image of our Mother-Intercessor from the September festival,"[4] she said, kissing the picture of the divine mother attached to the cross, and putting it into my hand. "Please give it to him, batyushka. You see, when he went to the *Kapkas*, I had a Te Deum sung, and made a vow that if he should be kept alive and safe, I would order this image of the divine mother. And here it is seventeen years that the Virgin and the saints have had him in their keeping; not once has he been wounded, and what battles he has been in, as it seems! .... When Mikhaïlo, who was with him, told me about it, my hair actually stood on end. You see, all that I know about him I have to hear from others; he never writes me anything about his doings, my dove,[5] — he is afraid of frightening me."

I had already heard in the Caucasus, but not from the captain himself, that he had been severely wounded four times; and, as was to be expected, he had not written his mother about his wounds any more than about his campaigns.

"Now let him wear this holy image," she continued. "I bless him with it. The most holy Intercessor protect him! especially in battle let him always take it with

[1] One and a third miles.

[2] An affectionate diminished diminutive; Pavel (Paul), Pasha, Pashenka.

[3] *Ladanka*, the bag containing sacred things worn by the pious, together with the baptismal cross.

[4] Festival of *Neopalimuiya Kupinui*, or the Burning Bush, held in honor of the *ikon*, or image, of the "Mother of God," September 4, O.S.

[5] *Galubchik.*

him! And so tell him, my dear friend,[1] that his mother gave him this message."

I promised faithfully to fulfil her commission.

"I know you will be fond of him, of my Pashenka," the old lady continued, — "he is such a splendid fellow! Would you believe me, not a year goes by without his sending me money, and he also helps Annushka, my daughter, and all from his wages alone. Truly I shall always thank God," she concluded, with tears in her eyes, "that He has given me such a child."

"Does he write you often?" I asked.

"Rarely, batyushka, — not more than once a year; and sometimes when he sends money he writes a little word, and sometimes he does n't. 'If I don't write you, mamenka,' he says, 'it means that I 'm alive and well; but if anything should happen, — which God forbid, — then they will write you for me.'"

When I gave the captain his mother's gift (it was in my room), he asked me for some wrapping-paper, carefully tied it up, and put it away. I told him many details of his mother's life; the captain was silent. When I had finished, he went into a corner, and took a very long time in filling his pipe.

"Yes, she 's a fine old lady," said he, from the corner, in a rather choked voice; "God grant that we may meet again!"

Great love and grief were expressed in these simple words.

"Why do you serve here?" I asked.

"Have to serve," he replied, with conviction. "And double pay means a good deal for a poor man!"

The captain lived economically; he did not play cards, he rarely drank to excess, and he smoked ordinary tobacco, which from some inexplicable reason he did not call by its usual name,[2] but *sambrotalicheski tabak*. The captain had pleased me even before this. He had one of those simple, calm Russian faces, and looked you straight in the eye agreeably and easily. But after this conversation I felt a genuine respect for him.

[1] *Moĭ batyushka.* [2] *Tiutiun.*

CHAPTER II

At four o'clock on the morning of the next day, the captain came riding up for me. He had on an old well-worn coat without epaulets, wide Lesghian trousers, a round white Circassian cap, with drooping *kurpeï*[1] dyed yellow, and an ugly-looking Asiatic saber across his shoulder. The little white *mashtak*[2] on which he rode came with head down, and mincing gait, and kept switching his slender tail. Though the good captain's figure was neither very warlike nor very handsome, yet there was in it such an expression of good-will toward every one around him, that it inspired involuntary respect.

I did not keep him waiting a minute, but immediately mounted, and we rode off together from the gate of the fortress.

The battalion was already a quarter of a mile ahead of us, and had the appearance of a black, solid body moving in waves. It was possible to make out that it was infantry, only from the circumstance that while the bayonets appeared like long, dense needles, occasionally there came to the ear the sounds of a soldier's song, the drum, and a charming tenor, the leader of the sixth company, — a song which I had more than once enjoyed at the fort.

The road ran through the midst of a deep, wide ravine, or *balka*, as it is called in the dialect of the Caucasus, along the banks of a small river, which at this time was *playing*, that is, was having a freshet. Flocks of wild pigeons hovered around it, now settling on the rocky shore, now wheeling about in mid-air in swift circles, and then disappearing from sight.

The sun was not yet visible, but the summit of the balka on the right began to grow luminous. The gray

[1] *Kurpeï* in the dialect of the Caucasus signifies *ovchina*, lambskin. — Author's Note.

[2] *Mashtak* in the dialect of the Caucasus signifies a small horse. — Author's Note.

and white crags, the greenish yellow moss, the clumps of different kinds of bushes,[1] wet with dew, stood out extraordinarily distinct and rotund in the pellucid golden light of the dawn.

On the other hand, the ravine, hidden in thick mist which rolled up like smoke in varying volumes, was damp and dark, and presented an evanescent mixture of colors — pale lilac, almost purple, dark green, and white.

Directly in front of us, against the dark blue of the horizon, with startling distinctness appeared the dazzling white, silent masses of the snow-capped mountains with their marvelous shadows and outlines exquisite even in the smallest details. Crickets, grasshoppers, and a thousand other insects were awake in the tall grass, and filled the air with their sharp, incessant clatter; it seemed as if a numberless multitude of tiny bells were jingling in our very ears. The atmosphere was fragrant with waters, with foliage, with mist; in a word, had all the fragrance of a beautiful early summer morning.

The captain struck a light, and began to puff at his pipe; the fragrance of sambrotalicheski tabak and of the punk struck me as extremely pleasant.

We rode along the side of the road so as to overtake the infantry as quickly as possible. The captain seemed more serious than usual; he did not take his Daghestan pipe from his mouth, and at every step he dug his heels into his horse's legs as the little beast, capering from one side to the other, laid out a scarcely noticeable dark green track through the damp, tall grass. Up from under his very feet, with its shrill cry,[2] and that drumming of the wings that is so sure to startle the huntsman in spite of himself, flew the pheasant, and slowly began to fly up. The captain paid not the slightest attention to it.

We had almost overtaken the battalion, when behind us were heard the hoof-beats of a galloping horse, and

[1] *Paliurus*, box-thorn, and *karagatch*, a kind of elm.

[2] *Tordokan'ye*, the cry of the *fazan*, pheasant. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

in an instant there rode by us a very handsome young fellow in an officer's coat, and a tall white *papakha*, or Circassian cap. As he caught up with us he smiled, bowed to the captain, and waved his whip. ....

I only had time to notice that he sat in the saddle and held the bridle with peculiar grace, and that he had beautiful dark eyes, a finely cut nose, and a mustache just beginning to grow. I was particularly attracted by the way in which he could not help smiling, as he noticed that we admired him. If by nothing else than his smile, one would have known that he was still very young.

"And now where is he going?" grumbled the captain, with a look of dissatisfaction, not taking his pipe from his mouth.

"Who is that?" I asked.

"Ensign Alanin, a subaltern officer of my company. .... Only last month he came from the School of Cadets."

"This is the first time that he is going into action, I suppose?" said I.

"And so he is overjoyed," replied the captain, thoughtfully, shaking his head; "it's youth."

"And why should n't he be glad? I can see that for a young officer this must be very interesting."

The captain said nothing for two minutes.

"And that's why I say 'it's youth,'" he continued, in his deep bass. "What is there to rejoice in, when there's nothing to see? Here when one goes often, one does n't find any pleasure in it. Here, let us suppose twenty of us officers are going: some of us will be either killed or wounded; that's likely. To-day my turn, to-morrow his, the next day somebody else's. So what is there to rejoice in?"

CHAPTER III

Scarcely had the bright sun risen above the mountains, and begun to shine into the valley where we were riding, when the phantasmagoric clouds of mist scattered, and it grew warm. The soldiers, with guns and knap-

sacks on their backs, marched slowly along the dusty road. In the ranks were frequently heard Malo-Russian dialogues and laughter. A few old soldiers in white linen coats — for the most part non-commissioned officers — marched along the roadside with their pipes, engaged in earnest conversation. The heavily laden wagons, drawn each by three horses, advanced step by step, and raised a thick dust, which hung motionless.

The mounted officers rode in advance; a few *jigited*, as they say in the Caucasus;[1] that is, applying the whip to their horses, they would spur them on to make four or five leaps, and then reined them in suddenly, pulling the head back. Others listened to the singers, who, notwithstanding the heat and the sultriness, indefatigably tuned up one song after another.

A hundred sazhens in advance of the infantry, on a great white horse, surrounded by mounted Tartars, rode a tall, handsome officer in Asiatic costume, known to the regiment as a man of reckless valor, and one who always tells the truth in any one's eyes.

He wore a black Tartar beshmet trimmed with silver braid, similar trousers, closely fitting new leggings,[2] with *chirazui*, a yellow *cherkeska*, or cloak, and tall papakha worn jauntily on the back of his head. On his breast and back were silver lacings, to which were attached his powder-flask and pistol behind; another pistol and a dagger in a silver sheath depended from his belt. On top of all this was buckled on a saber in a red morocco sheath adorned with silver; and over the shoulder hung his musket in a black case.

By his garb, his carriage, his manner, and indeed by every motion, it was manifest that his ambition was to ape the Tartars. He was just saying something, in a language that I did not understand, to the Tartars who rode with him; but from the doubtful, mocking glances

[1] *Jigit* or *djigit* in the Kumuits dialect signifies valiant, galliard. The Russians make from it the verb *jigitovat*, corresponding to *khrabrit'sa*, to be galliard, to show off. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

[2] *Chuviakis chirazami*; the word *chirazui* signifies galloons in the dialect of the Caucasus. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

which these latter gave one another, I came to the conclusion that they did not understand him either.

This was one of our young officers of the dare-devil, jigit order, who get themselves up in the style of Marlinsky and Lermontof. These men look upon the Caucasus no other wise than through the prism of the "Heroes of our Time," Mulla-Nurof,[1] and others, and in all their activities are directed, not by their own inclinations, but by the example of these models.

This lieutenant, for instance, was very likely fond of the society of well-bred women and men of importance, generals, colonels, adjutants, — indeed I believe that he was very fond of this society, because he was in the highest degree vainglorious, — but he considered it his unfailing duty to show his rough side to all important persons, although he offended them always more or less; and when any lady made her appearance at the fortress, he considered it his duty to ride by her windows with his kunaki,[2] dressed in nothing but a red shirt and with nothing but chuviaki on his bare legs, and shouting and swearing at the top of his voice — but all this not so much with the intention of insulting her, as with the wish to show her what handsome white legs he had, and how easy it would be to fall in love with him if only he himself were willing.

Or he often went by at night with two or three friendly Tartars to the mountains into ambush by the road so as to take by surprise and kill hostile Tartars coming along; and though more than once his heart told him that there was nothing brave in such a deed, yet he felt himself under obligations to inflict suffering on men who he thought had caused him to lose some of his illusions, and whom he affected to hate and despise. He wore two things which he never took off, — an immense holy image suspended around his neck, and a dagger

[1] The name of a character in one of Marlinsky's novels. The poet Lermontof's most famous novel was entitled *Heroï nasheva vrimeni*, a "Hero of our Time"; Lermontof, of Scotch origin, was killed in 1841 in a duel in the Caucausus at the early age of twenty-seven. — ED.

[2] *Kunak*, friend, guest-friend, in the dialect of the Caucasus.

above his shirt; he even went to bed with them. He firmly believed that enemies surrounded him. It was his greatest delight to argue that he ought to wreak vengeance on some one and wash out some insult in blood. He was persuaded that spite, vengeance, and hatred of the human race were the highest and most poetical of feelings. But his mistress, — a *Cherkeshenka*, or Circassian girl, of course, — whom I afterward chanced to meet, said that he was the mildest and gentlest of men, and that every evening he wrote in his gloomy diary, cast up his accounts on ruled paper, and got on his knees to say his prayers. And how much suffering he endured, to seem only to himself what he desired to be! because his comrades and the soldiers could not comprehend him as he desired!

Once, in one of his nocturnal expeditions with his Tartar kunaks, it happened that he put a bullet into the leg of a hostile Chechenets, and took him prisoner. This Chechenets for seven weeks thereafter lived with the lieutenant; the lieutenant dressed his wound, waited on him as if he were his nearest friend, and when he was cured sent him home with gifts. Afterward, during an expedition when the lieutenant was retreating from the post, having been repulsed by the enemy, he heard some one call him by name, and his wounded kunak strode out from among the hostile Tartars, and by signs asked him to do the same. The lieutenant went to meet his kunak, and shook hands with him. The mountaineers stood at some little distance, and refrained from firing; but, as soon as the lieutenant turned his horse to go back, several shot at him, and one bullet grazed the small of his back.

Another time I myself saw a fire break out by night in the fortress, and two companies of soldiers were detailed to put it out. Amid the crowd, lighted up by the ruddy glare of the conflagration, suddenly appeared the tall form of the man on a coal-black horse. He forced his way through the crowd, and rode straight up to the fire. As soon as he came near, the lieutenant leaped from his horse, and hastened into the house, which was

all in flames on one side. At the end of five minutes he emerged with singed hair and burned sleeves, carrying in his arms two doves which he had rescued from the flames.

His name was Rosenkranz; but he often spoke of his ancestry, traced it back to the Varangians, and clearly showed that he and his forefathers were genuine Russians.

CHAPTER IV

The sun had traveled half its course, and was pouring down through the glowing atmosphere its fierce rays on parched earth. The dark blue sky was absolutely clear; only the bases of the snow-capped mountains began to clothe themselves in pale lilac clouds. The motionless atmosphere seemed to be full of some impalpable dust; it became intolerably hot.

When the army came to a small brook that had overflowed half the road, the troops made a halt. The soldiers, stacking their arms, rushed to the stream. The battalion commander sat down in the shade, on a drum, and, showing by his broad countenance the degree of his rank, made ready, in company with a few officers, to take luncheon. The captain lay on the grass under the company's transport-wagon; the galliard lieutenant Rosenkranz and some other young officers, spreading out their *burki*, or Caucasian mantles, threw themselves down, and began to carouse, as any one could see by the flasks and bottles scattered around them and by the extraordinary liveliness of their singers, who, standing in a half-circle behind them, whistled an accompaniment to the Caucasian dance-song sung by a Lesghian girl: —

Shamyl resolved to make a league
In the years gone by,
Traï-raï, rattat-taï,
In the years gone by.[1]

[1] *Shamil uzdumal buntovat'sa*
V proshedshie godui ....
Traï-raï, ra-ta-taï,
V proshedshie godui.

Among these officers was also the young ensign who had passed us in the morning. He was very entertaining; his eyes gleamed, his tongue was a trifle entangled. He wanted to exchange kisses with every one, and show his good-will to them all. ....

Poor lad! he did not know that in acting this way he might be ridiculous, that his frankness and the gentleness which he showed to every one might win for him, not the love which he so much desired, but ridicule; he did not know this either, that when at last, thoroughly heated, he threw himself down on his burka, and leaned his head on his hand, letting his thick black curls fall over, he was extraordinarily handsome.

Two officers had crept under a wagon, and were playing cards on a hamper.

I listened with curiosity to the talk of the soldiers and officers, and attentively watched the expression of their faces; but, to tell the truth, in not one could I discover a shadow of that anxiety which I myself felt; jokes, laughter, anecdotes, expressed the universal carelessness, and indifference to the coming peril. How impossible to suppose that it was not fated for some never again to return along that road!

CHAPTER V

At seven o'clock in the evening, dusty and weary, we entered the wide, fortified gates of Fort N——.

The sun was setting, and shed oblique rosy rays over the picturesque batteries and lofty-walled gardens that surrounded the fortress, over the fields yellow for the harvest, and over the white clouds which, gathering around the snow-capped mountains, simulated their shapes, and formed a chain no less wonderful and beauteous. A young half moon, like a translucent cloud, shone above the horizon. In the *aul*, or native village, situated near the gate, a Tartar on the roof of a hut was calling the faithful to prayer. The singers broke out with new zeal and energy.

After resting and making my toilet, I set out to call upon an adjutant who was an acquaintance of mine, to ask him to make my intention known to the general. On the way from the suburb where I was quartered, I chanced to see a most unexpected spectacle in the fortress of N——. I was overtaken by a handsome two-seated carriage in which I saw a stylish bonnet, and heard French spoken. From the open window of the commandant's house came floating the sounds of some "Lizanka" or "Katenka" polka played on a wretched piano, out of tune. In the tavern which I was passing were sitting a number of clerks over their glasses of wine, with cigarettes in their hands, and I overheard one saying to another: —

"Excuse me, but taking politics into consideration, Marya Grigor'yevna is our first lady."

A humpbacked Jew of sickly countenance, dressed in a dilapidated coat, was creeping along with a shrill, battered hand-organ; and over the whole suburb echoed the sounds of the finale of "Lucia."

Two women in rustling gowns, with silk kerchiefs around their necks and bright-colored parasols in their hands, hastened past me on the plank sidewalk. Two girls, one in a pink, the other in a blue frock, with uncovered heads, were standing on the terrace of a small house, and affectedly laughing with the obvious intention of attracting the notice of some passing officers. Officers in new coats, white gloves, and glistening epaulets were parading up and down the streets and the boulevard.

I found my acquaintance on the lower floor of the general's house. I had scarcely had time to explain to him my desire, and have his assurance that it could most likely be gratified, when the handsome carriage which I had before seen rattled past the window where I was sitting. From the carriage descended a tall, slender man, in uniform of the infantry service and major's epaulets, and came up to the general's rooms.

"Ah! pardon me, I beg of you," said the aide, rising from his place: "it's absolutely necessary that I notify the general."

"Who is it that just came?" I asked.

"The countess," he replied, and, donning his uniform coat, hastened up-stairs.

In the course of a few minutes a short but very handsome man in a coat without epaulets, and a white cross in his buttonhole, appeared on the steps. Behind him came the major, the aide, and two other officers.

In his carriage, in his voice, in all his motions, the general showed that he had a very keen appreciation of his high importance.

"*Bon soir, madame la comtesse*," he said, extending his hand through the carriage window.

A dainty little hand in dogskin glove pressed his hand, and a pretty, smiling little visage under a yellow bonnet appeared in the window.

Of the conversation, which lasted several minutes, I only heard the general saying in French, with a smile, as I went by: —

"You know that I have vowed to fight the infidels; beware of becoming one!"

A laugh rang from the carriage.

"*Adieu donc, cher général.*"

"*Non, à revoir*," said the general, returning to the steps of the staircase; "don't forget that I have invited myself for to-morrow evening."

The carriage drove away.

"Here is a man," said I to myself, as I went home, "who has everything that Russians strive after, — rank, wealth, society, — and this man, before a battle the outcome of which God only knows, jests with a pretty little woman, and promises to drink tea with her on the next day, just as if he was meeting her at a ball!"

There also at that adjutant's I became acquainted with a man who still more surprised me; it was the young lieutenant of the K. regiment, who was distinguished for his almost feminine mildness and cowardice. He came to the adjutant to pour out his peevishness and ill humor against those men who, he thought, were intriguing against him to keep him from taking part in the matter in hand.

He declared that it was hateful to be treated so, that it was not doing as comrades ought, that he would remember him, and so forth.

As soon as I saw the expression of his face, as soon as I heard the sound of his voice, I could not escape the conviction that he was not only not putting it on, but was deeply stirred and hurt because he was not allowed to go against the Cherkess, and expose himself to their fire; he was as much hurt as a child is hurt who is unjustly punished. .... I could not understand it at all.

CHAPTER VI

At ten o'clock in the evening the troops were ordered to march. At half-past nine I mounted my horse and started off to find the general; but on reflecting that he and his aide must be busy, I remained in the street, and, tying my horse to a fence, sat down on the terrace to wait until the general should come.

The heat and glare of the day had already vanished in the fresh night air and in the obscure light of the young moon, which, infolding around itself a pale gleaming halo against the dark blue of the starry sky, was beginning to decline. Lights shone in the windows of the houses and in the chinks of the earth huts. The gracefully proportioned poplars in the gardens, standing out against the horizon from behind the earth huts, the reed-thatched roofs of which gleamed pale in the moonlight, seemed still taller and blacker.

The long shadows of the houses, of the trees, of the fences, lay beautifully across the white dusty road. .... In the river rang incessantly the voice of the frogs;[1] in the streets were heard hurrying steps, and sounds of voices, and the galloping of horses. From the suburb came floating, now and again, the strains of the hand-organ: now the popular Russian air, "The winds are blowing," now one of the Aurora waltzes.

[1] The frogs in the Caucasus make a sound entirely different from the *kvakan'ye* of the Russian frogs. — Author's Note.

I will not tell what my thoughts were: in the first place, because I should be ashamed to confess to the melancholy ideas which without cessation arose in my mind, while all around me I perceived only gayety and mirth; and, in the second place, because they have nothing to do with my story.

I was so deeply engrossed in thought, that I did not notice that the bell was ringing for eleven o'clock, and the general was riding past me with his suite.

The rear-guard was just at the fortress gate. I forced my way across the bridge, amid a crush of cannon, caissons, military wagons, and commanding officers shouting at the top of their voices. After reaching the gate, I rode at a brisk trot for almost a verst, past the army stretched out and silently moving through the darkness, and overtook the general. As I made my way past the mounted artillery dragging their ordnance, amid the cannon and officers, a German voice, like a disagreeable dissonance interrupting soft and majestic harmony, struck my ear. It screamed: —

"Agkhtingkhist,[1] bring a linstock."

And a soldier's voice replied, quick as a flash, "Chevchenko! the lieutenant asks for a light!"

The greater part of the sky had become enveloped in long dark gray clouds; here and there gleamed from between them the lusterless stars. The moon was now sinking behind the near horizon of dark mountains which were on the right; and it shed on their summits a feeble, waning half-light, which contrasted sharply with the impenetrable darkness that marked their bases.

The air was mild, and so still, that not a single grass-blade, not a single mist-wreath, moved. It became so dark that it was impossible to distinguish objects, even though very near at hand. On the side of the road, there seemed to me sometimes to be rocks, sometimes animals, sometimes strange men; and I knew that they were bushes only when I heard them rustle, and felt the coolness of the dew with which they were covered. In

[1] German mispronunciation for *Antichrist*, the accent of which in Russian falls on the penult.

front of me I saw a dense, waving black shadow, behind which followed a few moving spots; this was the vanguard of cavalry, and the general with his suite. Between us moved another similar black mass, but this was not as high as the first; this was the infantry.

Such silence reigned in the whole detachment, that there could be plainly distinguished all the harmonious voices of the night, full of mysterious charm. The distant melancholy howls of jackals, sometimes like the wails of despair, sometimes like laughter; the monotonous ringing song of the cricket, the frog, the quail; a gradually approaching murmur, the cause of which I could not make clear to my own mind; and all those nocturnal, almost audible motions of Nature, which it is so impossible either to comprehend or define, — united into one complete, beautiful harmony which we call "the silence of night."

This silence was broken, or rather was unified, by the dull thud of the hoofs, and the rustling of the tall grass through which the division was slowly moving.

Occasionally, however, was heard in the ranks the ring of a heavy cannon, the sound of clashing bayonets, stifled conversation, and the snorting of a horse.

Nature breathed peacefully in beauty and power.

Is it possible that people find no room to live together in this beautiful world, under this boundless starry heaven? Is it possible that, amid this bewitching Nature, the soul of man can harbor the sentiments of hatred and revenge, or the passion for inflicting destruction on his kind? All ugly feelings in the heart of man ought, it would seem, to vanish away in this intercourse with Nature — with this immediate expression of beauty and goodness!

CHAPTER VII

We had now been marching more than two hours. I began to feel chilly, and to be overcome with drowsiness. In the darkness the same indistinct objects dimly

appeared; at a little distance, the same black shadow, the same moving spots. Beside me was the crupper of a white horse, which switched its tail and moved its hind legs in its vigorous stride. I could see a back in a white Circassian shirt, against which was outlined a carbine in its black case, and the handle of a pistol in an embroidered holster; the glow of a cigarette casting a gleam on a reddish mustache, a fur collar, and a hand in a chamois-skin glove.

I leaned over my horse's neck, closed my eyes, and lost myself for a few minutes; then suddenly the well-known hoof-beat and rustling came into my consciousness again. I looked around, and it seemed to me as if I were standing still in one spot, and that the black shadow in front of me was moving down on me; or else that the shadow stood still, and I was rapidly riding down on it.

At one such moment I was more strongly than ever impressed by that incessantly approaching sound, the cause of which I could not fathom; it was the roar of water. We were passing through a deep gulch, and coming close to a mountain river, which at that season was in full flood.[1] The roaring became louder, the damp grass grew taller and thicker, bushes were encountered in denser clumps, and the horizon narrowed itself down to closer limits. Now and then, in different places in the dark hollows of the mountains, bright fires flashed out and were immediately extinguished.

"Tell me, please, what are those fires," I asked in a whisper of the Tartar riding at my side.

"Don't you really know?" was his reply.

"No," said I.

"That is mountain straw tied to a *tayak*,[2] and the light is waved."

"What for?"

"So that every man may know the Russian is coming. Now in the auls," he added with a laugh, "*aï, aï!* the

[1] In the Causcasus the freshets take place in the month of July. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

[2] *Tayak* in the dialect of the Caucasus signifies pole. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

tomasha [1] are flying about; every sort of khurda-murda [2] will be hurried into the ravines."

"How do they know so soon in the mountains that the expedition is coming?" I asked.

"*Eĭ!* How can they help knowing? It's known everywhere: that's the kind of people we are."

"And so Shamyl is now getting ready to take the field?" I asked.

"*Yok* (no)," he replied, shaking his head as a sign of negation, "Shamyl will not take the field. Shamyl will send his naïbs,[3] and he himself will look down from up yonder through his glass."

"But does he live a long way off?"

"Not a long way off. Here, at your left, about ten versts he will be."

"How do you know that?" I inquired. "Have you been there?"

"I've been there. All of us in the mountains have."

"And you have seen Shamyl?"

"Pikh! Shamyl is not to be seen by us. A hundred, three hundred, a thousand murids [4] surround him. Shamyl will be in the midst of them," he said, with an expression of fawning servility.

Looking upward, it was possible to make out that the sky, which had become clear again, was lighter in the east, and the Pleiades were sinking down into the horizon. But in the gulch through which we were passing it was damp and dark.

Suddenly, a little in advance of us, from out the darkness flashed a number of lights; at the same instant, with a ping, some bullets whizzed by, and from out the silence that surrounded us from afar musket-shots were

[1] *Tomasha* means slaves in the ordinary dialect invented for intercourse between Russians and Tartars. There are many words in this strange dialect, the roots of which are not to be found in either Russian or Tartar. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

[2] Goods and chattels in the same dialect. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

[3] *Naïb* ordinarily means a Mohammedan judge or high religious officer, in Turkey and the Caucasus; here it means an officer whom the great Circassian chieftain Shamyl endowed with special authority.

[4] The word *murid* has many significations, but as it is here employed it means something between adjutant and body-guard. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

heard, and a loud shrill cry. This was the vanguard of the enemy's pickets. The Tartars of which it was composed set up their war-cry, shot at random, and fled in all directions.

Everything became silent again. The general summoned his interpreter. The Tartar in a white cherkeska hastened up to him, and the two held a rather long conversation in a sort of whisper and with many gestures.

"Colonel Khasanof! give orders to scatter the line," said the general, in a low, deliberate, but distinct tone of voice.

The division went down to the river. The black mountains stood back from the pass; it was beginning to grow light. The arch of heaven, in which the pale, lusterless stars were barely visible, seemed to grow higher; the dawn began to glow brightly in the east; a cool, penetrating breeze sprang up from the west, and a bright mist like steam arose from the foaming river.

CHAPTER VIII

The guide pointed out the ford; and the vanguard of cavalry, with the general and his suite immediately in its rear, began to cross the river. The water, which reached the horses' breasts, rushed with extraordinary violence among the white boulders which in some places came to the top, and foaming, gurgling whirlpools were formed around the horses' legs. The horses were surprised by the roar of the water, lifted their heads, pricked up their ears, but slowly and carefully picked their way against the current along the uneven bottom. The riders held up their legs and firearms. The foot-soldiers, literally in their shirts alone, lifting above the water their muskets, to which were fastened their bundles of clothing, struggled against the force of the stream by clinging hand to hand, a score of men together showing noticeable determination on their excited faces. The artillerymen on horseback, with a loud

shout, put their horses into the water at full trot. The cannon and green-painted caissons, over which now and then the water came pouring, plunged with a clang over the rocky bottom; but the noble Cossack horses pulled with united effort, made the water foam, and with dripping tails and manes emerged on the farther shore.

As soon as the crossing was effected, the general's face suddenly took on an expression of deliberation and seriousness; he wheeled his horse around, and at full gallop rode across the wide forest-surrounded field which spread before us. The mounted line of Cossacks were scattered along the edge of the forest.

In the forest appears a man in cherkeska and lamb-skin cap; then a second and a third. .... One of the officers shouted: —

"Those are Tartars!"

At this instant a puff of smoke comes from behind a tree — a report — another. .... The quick volleys of our men drown out those of the enemy. Only occasionally a bullet, with long-drawn ping like the hum of a bee, flies by, and shows that not all the shots are ours.

Here the infantry, at double quick, and with fixed bayonets, dashed against the line; one can hear the heavy reports of the guns, the metallic ring of flying grape-shot, the whiz of rockets, the crackling of musketry. The cavalry, the infantry, and the artillery converge from all sides on the wide field. The smoke from the guns, rockets, and firearms unites with the early mist arising from the dew-covered grass.

Colonel Khasanof gallops up to the general, and reins in his horse while at full tilt.

"Your excellency," says he, lifting his hand to his cap, "give orders for the cavalry to advance. The standards are in sight," [1] and he points with his whip to mounted Tartars, at the head of whom ride two men on white horses with red and blue streamers on their lances.

[1] *Zanatchki.* This word among the mountaineers has almost the signification of banner, with this single distinction, that each jigit may make a standard for himself and carry it. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

"*S Bogom*, God speed it, Ivan Mikhaïlovitch," says the general.

The colonel wheels his horse round on the spot, draws his saber, and shouts "Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" echoes from the ranks, and the cavalry dash after him.

All look on with excitement: there is a standard; another; a third; a fourth!....

The enemy, not waiting the assault, fly into the forest, and open a musket fire from behind the trees. The bullets fly more and more thickly.

"*Quel charmant coup d'œil!*" exclaimed the general, rising easily in English fashion on his coal-black, slender-limbed little steed.

"*Charmant*," replies the major, who swallows his R's like a Frenchman, and, whipping up his horse, dashes after the general. "It 's a genuine pleasure to carry on war in such a fine country,"[1] says he.

"And above all in good company," adds the general, still in French, with a pleasant smile.

The major bowed.

At this time a cannon-ball from the enemy comes flying by with a swift, disagreeable whiz, and strikes something; immediately is heard the groan of a wounded man. This groan impresses me so painfully that the martial picture instantly loses for me all its fascination; but no one besides myself seems to be affected in the same way: the major smiles, apparently with great satisfaction; another officer with perfect equanimity repeats the opening words of a speech; the general looks in the opposite direction, and with the most tranquil smile says something in French.

"Will you give orders to reply to their fire?" asks the commander of the artillery, galloping up.

"Yes, scare them a little," says the general, carelessly, lighting a cigar.

The battery is unlimbered, and the cannonade begins. The ground groans under the report; the firing continues without cessation; and the smoke, in which it is

[1] *C'est un vrai plaisir, que la guerre dans un aussi beau pays.*

scarcely possible to distinguish those serving the guns, blinds the eyes.

The aul is battered down. Again Colonel Khasanof dashes up, and at the general's command darts off to the aul. The war-cry is heard again, and the cavalry disappears in the cloud of its own dust.

The spectacle was truly magnificent. One thing only spoiled the general impression for me as a man who had no part in the affair, and was wholly unwonted to it; and this was that there was too much of it, — the motion and the animation and the shouts. Involuntarily the comparison occurred to me of a man who in his haste would cut the air with a hatchet.

CHAPTER IX

The aul was already in possession of our men, and not a soul of the enemy remained in it when the general with his suite, to which I had joined myself, entered it.

The long neat *sakli*, or huts, with their flat earthen roofs and red chimneys, were situated on rough, rocky hills, between which ran a small river. On one side were seen the green gardens, shining in the clear sunlight, with monstrous pear trees, and the plum trees, called *luitcha*. The other side bristled with strange shadows, where stood the high perpendicular stones of a cemetery, and the tall wooden poles adorned at the ends with balls and variegated banners. These were the tombs of jigits.

The army stood drawn up within the gates.

After a moment the dragoons, the Cossacks, the infantry, with evident joy, were let loose through the crooked streets, and the empty aul suddenly teemed with life.

Here a roof is crushed in; the ax rings on a tough tree, and the plank door is broken down; there hayricks, fences, and huts are burning, and the dense smoke arises like a tower in the clear air. Here a Cossack is carrying off sacks of flour, and carpets; a soldier with a gay face

lugs from a hut a tin basin and some kind of a rag; another with outstretched arms is trying to catch a couple of hens, which, cackling furiously, fly about the yard; a third is going somewhere with a monstrous kumgan [1] of milk, and drinking as he goes, and when he has had his fill throws it on the ground with a loud laugh.

The battalion which I had accompanied from Fort N—— was also in the aul. The captain was sitting on the roof of a hut, and was puffing from his short little pipe clouds of smoke of sambrotalicheski tabak with such an indifferent expression of countenance that when I saw him I forgot that I was in a hostile aul, and it seemed to me that I was actually at home with him.

"Ah! and here you are?" he said, as he caught sight of me.

The tall form of Lieutenant Rosenkranz flashed here and there through the aul. Without a moment's pause he was engaged in carrying out orders, and he had the appearance of a man who had all he could do. I saw him coming out of a hut, his face full of triumph; behind him two soldiers were dragging an old Tartar with his arms tied. The old man, whose garb consisted merely of a many-colored, tattered beshmet, and ragged drawers, was so feeble that it seemed as if his bony arms, tightly tied behind his misshapen back, were almost falling from his shoulders; and his crooked bare legs moved with difficulty. His face and even a part of his shaven head were covered with deep wrinkles; his distorted, toothless mouth, encircled by gray clipped mustache and beard, incessantly mumbled as if he were whispering something; but his handsome eyes, from which the lashes were gone, still gleamed with fire, and clearly expressed an old man's indifference to life.

Rosenkranz through an interpreter asked him why he had not gone with the others.

"Where should I go?" he replied, calmly looking away.

"Where the rest have gone," suggested some one.

[1] *Kumgan*, pitcher. —AUTHOR'S NOTE.

"The jigits have gone to fight with the Russians, but I am an old man."

"Aren't you afraid of the Russians?"

"What will the Russians do to me? I am an old man," he repeated, carelessly glancing at the circle surrounding him.

On the way back, I saw this old man, without a hat, with his hands still tied, jolting behind a mounted Cossack, and he was looking about him with the same expression of unconcern. He was necessary in an exchange of prisoners.

I went to the staircase and crept up to where the captain was.

"Not many of the enemy, it seems," I said to him, wishing to obtain his opinion about the affair.

"The enemy?" he repeated with surprise; "there were n't any at all. Do you call these enemies? .... Here, when evening comes, you will see how we shall retreat; you will see how they will go with us! Won't they show themselves there, though!" he added, pointing with his pipe to the forest which we had passed in the morning.

"What is that?" I asked anxiously, interrupting the captain, and drawing his attention to some Don Cossacks who were grouped around some one not far from us.

Among them was heard something like the weeping of a child, and the words: —

"Eh! don't cut .... wait .... you will be seen .... here 's a knife, Yevstigneïtch .... give him the knife." ....

"They are up to some mischief, the brutes," said the captain, indifferently.

But at this very instant, suddenly from around the corner came the handsome ensign with burning, horror-stricken face, and, waving his hands, rushed among the Cossacks.

"Don't you move! don't kill him!" he cried, in his boyish treble.

When the Cossacks saw the officer they started back, and allowed a little white goat to escape from their

hands. The young ensign was wholly taken aback, began to mutter something, and stood before them full of confusion. When he caught sight of the captain and me on the roof, he grew still redder in the face, and springing up the steps, joined us.

"I thought they were going to kill a child," he said, with a timid smile.

CHAPTER X

THE general had gone on ahead with the cavalry. The battalion with which I had come from Fort N—— remained in the rear-guard. The companies under command of Captain Khlopof and Lieutenant Rosenkranz were retreating together.

The captain's prediction was fully justified; as soon as we had reached the narrow forest of which he had spoken, from both sides the mountaineers, mounted and on foot, began to show themselves incessantly, and so near that I could very distinctly see many crouching down, with muskets in their hands, and running from tree to tree.

The captain took off his hat, and piously made the sign of the cross; a few old soldiers did the same. In the forest were heard shouts, the words, "*iaï! Giaur! Urus! iaï!*"

Dry, short musket reports followed in quick succession, and bullets whizzed from both sides. Our men silently replied with a running fire; only occasionally in the ranks were heard exclamations in the guise of directions: "*He*[1] has stopped shooting there;".... "*He* has a good chance behind the trees;".... "We ought to have cannon," and such expressions.

The cannon were brought to bear on the range, and after a few discharges of grape the enemy apparently gave way; but after a little their fire became more and

[1] *On* — he — the collective expression by which the soldiers in the Caucasus indicate the enemy. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

more violent with each step that the army took, and the shouts and war-cries increased.

We were scarcely half a mile [1] from the aul when the enemy's shot began to hail down on us. I saw a ball with a thud strike one soldier dead — but why relate details of this terrible spectacle, when I myself would give much to forget it?

Lieutenant Rosenkranz was firing his musket without a moment's cessation; with animating voice he was shouting to the soldiers, and galloping at full speed from one end of the line to the other. He was slightly pale, and this was decidedly becoming to his martial countenance.

The handsome ensign was in his element; his beautiful eyes gleamed with resolution, his mouth was slightly parted with a smile; he was constantly riding up to the captain, and asking permission to charge.[2]

"We 'll drive them back," he said impulsively, — "we 'll drive them back surely."

"No need of it," replied the captain, gently; "we must get out of here."

The captain's company occupied the edge of the forest, and was fully exposed to the enemy's fire. The captain, in his well-worn coat and tattered cap, slackening the reins for his white trotter and clinging by his short stirrups, silently stayed in one place. — The soldiers were so well trained, and did their work so accurately, that there was no need of giving commands to them. — Only now and then he raised his voice, and shouted to those who exposed their heads. The captain's face was very far from martial; but such truth and simplicity were manifest in it, that it impressed me profoundly.

"There is some one who is truly brave," I involuntarily said to myself.

He was almost exactly the same as I had always seen him; the same tranquil motions, the same even voice, the same expression of frankness on his homely but honest face; only by his more than ordinarily keen glance it was possible to recognize him as a man who

[1] 2100 feet. [2] *Brositsa na ura* — to rush with a hurrah!

was calmly attending to his business. It is easy to say *the same as always;* but how different were the traits that I noticed in others! one tried to seem calmer, another rougher, a third gayer, than usual; but by the captain's face it was manifest that he did not even understand *how to seem.*

The Frenchman who at Waterloo said, *La garde meurt, mais ne se rend pas*, and other heroes, especially among the French, who have uttered notable sayings, were brave, and really uttered notable sayings; but between their bravery, and the bravery of the captain, is this difference, that if a great saying in regard to any subject came into my hero's mind, I believe he would not have uttered it: in the first place, because he would have feared that in saying something great he might spoil a great deed; and, secondly, because when a man is conscious within himself of the power to do a great deed, there is no need of saying anything at all. This, in my opinion, is the especial and lofty character of Russian bravery; and how, henceforth, can it fail to wound the Russian heart when among our young warriors one hears French platitudes which have their vogue because they were the stock phrases of the old French nobility? ....

Suddenly, from the direction in which the handsome ensign with his division was stationed, was heard a faint hurrah from the enemy. Turning round at this shouting I saw thirty soldiers who, with muskets in their hands and knapsacks on their shoulders, were going at double-quick across the plowed field. They stumbled, but still pushed ahead and shouted. Leading them galloped the young ensign, waving his saber.

All were lost to sight in the forest. ....

At the end of a few moments of shouting and clash of arms, a frightened horse came dashing out of the woods, and just at the edge soldiers were seen bearing the killed and wounded. Among the latter was the young ensign. Two soldiers carried him in their arms. He was pale as a sheet, and his graceful head, where could be now detected only the shadow of that martial

enthusiasm which inspired him but a moment before, was strangely drawn down between his shoulders and rested on his breast. On his white shirt, under his coat, which was torn open, could be seen a small bloodstain.

"Akh! what a pity!" I said, as I involuntarily turned away from this heartrending spectacle.

"Indeed, it's too bad," said an old soldier, who with gloomy face stood beside me leaning on his musket. "He was n't afraid of anything! How is this possible?" he added, looking steadily at the wounded lad. "Always foolish! and now he has to pay for it!"

"And are n't you afraid?" I asked.

"No, indeed!"

CHAPTER XI

Four soldiers bore the ensign on a litter; behind them followed a train-soldier, leading a lean, foundered horse laden with two green chests in which were the surgeon's implements. They were expecting the doctor. The officers hurried up to the litter, and tried to encourage and comfort the wounded lad.

"Well, brother Alanin, it 'll be some time before you dance and make merry again," said Lieutenant Rosenkranz, coming up with a smile.

He probably intended these words to sustain the handsome ensign's courage; but, as could be easily seen from the coldly mournful expression in the eyes of the latter, these words did not produce the wished-for effect.

The captain also came up. He gazed earnestly at the wounded young fellow, and his ever cold, calm face expressed heartfelt pity.

"How is it, my dear Anatoli Ivanuitch?" said he, in a tone which rang with a deeper sympathy than I had expected from him; "we see it 's as God wills."

The wounded lad looked up; his pale face was lighted with a mournful smile.

"Yes, I disobeyed you."

"Say rather, it was God's will," replied the captain.

The doctor, who had now arrived, took from his chest bandages, probes, and other instruments, and, rolling up his sleeves, approached the sufferer with a reassuring smile.

"So it seems they have been making a little hole through you," he said, in a tone of jesting unconcern. "Let us have a look at the place."

The ensign listened, but in the gaze which he fixed on the jolly doctor were expressed surprise and reproachfulness, to which the latter paid no heed. He began to probe the wound and examine it from all sides; but at last the sufferer, losing his patience, pushed away his hand with a heavy groan. ....

"Let me be," he said, in an almost inaudible voice; "it makes no difference; I am dying."

With these words he fell on his back; and five minutes later, when I joined the group gathered about him, and asked a soldier, "How is the ensign?" I was told, "*He has gone.*"

CHAPTER XII

It was already late when the detachment, deploying in a broad column, entered the fortress with songs.

The sun had set behind the snow-covered mountain crest, and was throwing its last rosy rays on a long delicate cloud which stretched across the bright pellucid western sky. The snow-capped mountains began to clothe themselves in purple mist; only their upper outlines were marked with extraordinary distinctness against the violet light of the sunset. The clear moon, which had long been up, began to shed its light through the dark blue sky. The green of the grass and of the trees changed to black, and grew wet with dew. The dark masses of the army, with gradually increasing tumult, advanced across the magnificent field; from different

sides were heard the sounds of cymbals, drums, and merry songs. The leader of the sixth company sang out with full strength, and full of feeling and power the notes of his clear robust tenor were borne afar through the translucent evening air.

THE WOOD-CUTTING EXPEDITION

(*Rubka L'yesa*)

THE STORY OF A YUNKER'S[1] *ADVENTURE*

CHAPTER I

IN midwinter, in the year 185–, a division of our battery was engaged in an expedition on the Great Chechen River. On the evening of February 26, having been informed that the platoon which I commanded in the absence of its regular officer was detailed for the following day to help cut down the forest, and having that evening obtained and given the necessary directions, I betook myself to my tent earlier than usual; and as I had not got into the bad habit of warming it with burning coals, I threw myself, without undressing, on my bed made of branches, and, drawing my Circassian cap over my eyes, I rolled myself up in my shuba, and fell into that peculiarly deep and heavy sleep which one obtains at the moment of tumult and disquietude on the eve of a great peril. The anticipation of the morrow's action brought me to such a state.

At three o'clock in the morning, while it was still perfectly dark, my warm sheepskin was pulled off from me, and the red light of a candle was unpleasantly flashed upon my sleepy eyes.

"It 's time to get up," said some one's voice.

[1] *Yunker* (German *Junker*) is a non-commissioned officer belonging to the nobility. Count Tolstoï himself began his military service in the Caucasus as a Yunker.

I shut my eyes, without knowing what I was doing, wrapped my sheepskin around me again, and dropped off into slumber.

"It 's time to get up," repeated Dmitri, relentlessly, shaking me by the shoulder. "The infantry are starting."

I suddenly came to a sense of the reality of things, started up, and sprang to my feet.

Having hastily swallowed a glass of tea, and washed in ice-water, I crept out from my tent, and went to the "park."[1]

It was dark, misty, and cold. The night fires, burning here and there throughout the camp, lighted up the forms of drowsy soldiers scattered around them, and made the darkness deeper by their ruddy flickering flames. Near at hand one could hear monotonous, tranquil snoring; in the distance, movement, the babble of voices, and the jangle of arms, as the foot-soldiers got in readiness for the expedition. There was an odor of smoke, manure, wicks, and fog. The morning frost crept down my back, and my teeth chattered in spite of all my efforts to prevent it.

Only by the snorting and occasional stamping of horses could one make out in the impenetrable darkness where the harnessed limbers and caissons were drawn up, and, by the flashing points of the linstocks, where the cannon were. With the words *s Bogom*, — God speed it, — the first gun moved off with a clang, followed by the rumbling caisson, and the platoon got under way.

We all took off our caps, and made the sign of the cross. Taking its place in the interval between the infantry, our platoon halted, and waited from four o'clock until the muster of the whole force was made, and the commander came.

"There 's one of our men missing, Nikolaï Petrovitch," said a black form coming to me. I recognized him by his voice only as the platoon-artillerist Maksimof.

"Who?"

[1] The place where the artillery stands. — AUTHOR'S NOTE IN TEXT.

"Velenchuk is missing. When we hitched up he was here, I saw him; but now he 's gone."

As it was entirely unlikely that the column would move immediately, we determined to send Corporal Antonof to find Velenchuk. Shortly after this, the sound of several horses riding by us in the darkness was heard; this was the commander and his suite. In a few moments the head of the column stirred and started, — finally we also moved, — but Antonof and Velenchuk had not appeared.

However, we had not gone a hundred paces when the two soldiers overtook us.

"Where was he?" I asked of Antonof.

"In the 'park,' asleep."

"What! he was drunk, was n't he?"

"No, not at all."

"What made him go to sleep, then?"

"I don't know."

During three hours of darkness we slowly defiled in monotonous silence across uncultivated, snowless fields and low bushes which crackled under the wheels of the ordnance.

At last, after we had crossed a shallow but phenomenally rapid brook, a halt was called, and from the vanguard were heard desultory musket-shots. These sounds, as always, created the most extraordinary excitement in us all. The division had been almost asleep; now the ranks became alive with conversation, repartees, and laughter. Some of the soldiers wrestled with their mates; others played hop, skip, and jump; others chewed on their hardtack, or, to pass away the time, engaged in drumming the different roll-calls. Meantime the fog slowly began to lift in the east, the dampness became more palpable, and the surrounding objects gradually made themselves manifest emerging from the darkness.

I already began to make out the green caissons and gun-carriages, the brass cannon wet with mist, the familiar forms of my soldiers whom I knew even to the least details, the sorrel horses, and the files of infantry,

with their bright bayonets, their knapsacks, ramrods, and canteens on their backs.

We were quickly in motion again, and, after going a few hundred paces where there was no road, were shown the appointed place. On the right were seen the steep banks of a winding river and the high wooden posts of a Tartar burying-ground. At the left and in front of us, through the fog, appeared the black belt. The platoon got under way with the limbers. The eighth company, which was protecting us, stacked their arms; and a battalion of soldiers with muskets and axes started for the forest.

Not five minutes had elapsed when on all sides piles of wood began to crackle and smoke; the soldiers were swarming about, fanning the fires with their hands and feet, lugging brushwood and logs; and in the forest were heard the incessant strokes of a hundred axes and the crash of falling trees.

The artillery, with not a little spirit of rivalry with the infantry, heaped up their pile,— although the fire was already burning so fiercely that it was impossible to get within six feet of it, and the dense black smoke was pouring up through the icy branches, from which the water dropped hissing into the flames, as the soldiers heaped them on the fire; and the glowing coals dropped down on the dead white grass exposed by the heat. Still it was all mere boy's play to the soldiers; they dragged great logs, threw on the tall steppe grass, and fanned the fire more and more.

As I came near a bonfire to light a cigarette, Velenchuk, always officious, but, now that he had been found napping, showing himself more actively engaged about the fire than any one else, in an excess of zeal seized a coal with his naked hand from the very middle of the fire, tossed it from one palm to the other two or three times, and flung it on the ground.

"Light a match and give it to him," said one man. "Bring a linstock, fellows," said another.

When I at last lighted my cigarette without the aid of Velenchuk, who tried to bring another coal from the

fire, he rubbed his burnt fingers on the back of his sheepskin coat, and, doubtless for the sake of doing something, seized a great plane-tree stump, and with a mighty swing flung it on the fire. When at last it seemed to him that he might rest, he went close to the fire, spread out his cloak, which he wore like a mantle fastened at the back by a single button, stretched his legs, folded his great black hands in his lap, and, opening his mouth a little, closed his eyes.

"O dear![1] I forgot my pipe! What a shame, fellows!" he said, after a short silence, and not addressing anybody in particular.

CHAPTER II

In Russia there are three predominating types of soldiers, which embrace the soldiers of all arms, — those of the Caucasus, of the line, the guards, the infantry, the cavalry, the artillery, and the rest.

These three types, with many subdivisions and combinations, are as follows: —

(1) The obedient,
(2) The domineering or dictatorial, and
(3) The desperate.

The obedient are subdivided into (*a*) the apathetic-obedient and (*b*) the energetic-obedient.

The domineering are subdivided into (*a*) the gruffly domineering and (*b*) the diplomatically domineering.

The desperate are subdivided into (*a*) the humorously desperate and (*b*) the criminally desperate.

The type more frequently encountered than the rest — the type most gentle, most sympathetic, and for the most part endowed with the Christian virtues of meekness, devotion, patience, and submission to the will of God — is that of the obedient.

The distinctive character of the apathetic-obedient is a certain invincible indifference and disdain of all the turns of fortune that may overtake him.

[1] *Ekh-ma.*

The characteristic trait of the drunken obedient is a mild poetical tendency and sensitiveness.

The characteristic trait of the energetic-obedient is his limitation in intellectual faculties, united with an endless assiduity and fervor.

The type of the domineering is to be found more especially in the higher spheres of the army: corporals, non-commissioned officers, sergeants, and others. In the first division of the gruffly domineering are the high-born, the energetic, and especially the martial type, not excepting those who are stern in a lofty poetic way (to this category belonged Corporal Antonof, with whom I intend to make the reader acquainted).

The second division is composed of the diplomatically domineering, and this class has for some time been making rapid advances. The diplomatically domineering is always eloquent, knows how to read, goes about in a pink shirt, does not eat from the common kettle, often smokes Musatof tobacco, considers himself immeasurably higher than the simple soldier, and is himself rarely as good a soldier as the gruffly domineering of the first class.

The type of the desperate is almost the same as that of the domineering, that is, it is good in the first division, — the humorously desperate, the characteristic features of whom are an invariable jollity, a mighty aptitude for everything, a wealth of nature and boldness.

The second division is, in the same way, detestable: the criminally desperate, but these, it must be said for the honor of the Russian army, are very rarely met with, and, if they are met with, then they are quickly drummed out of comradeship with the true soldier. Atheism, and a certain audacity in crime, are the chief traits of this character.

Velenchuk came under the head of the energetically obedient. He was a Little Russian by birth, had been fifteen years in the service; and, while he was uncomely and none too capable as a soldier, still he was simple-hearted, kind, and extraordinarily full of zeal, though

for the most part misdirected zeal, and he was extraordinarily honest.

I say extraordinarily honest, because the year before there had been an occurrence in which he had given a remarkable exhibition of this characteristic. You must know that almost every soldier has his own trade. The greater number are tailors and shoemakers. Velenchuk himself practised the trade of tailoring; and, judging from the fact that Sergeant Mikhaïl Dorofeïtch gave him his custom, it is safe to say that he had reached a famous degree of accomplishment. The year before, it happened that, while in camp, Velenchuk took an elegant cloak to make for Mikhaïl Dorofeïtch. But that very night, after he had cut the cloth, and stitched on the trimmings, and put it under his pillow in his tent, a misfortune befell him: the cloth, which was worth seven rubles, disappeared during the night. Velenchuk, with tears in his eyes, with pale quivering lips, and with stifled lamentations, confessed the circumstance to the sergeant.

Mikhaïl Dorofeïtch fell into a passion. In the first moment of his indignation he threatened the tailor; but afterward, like a kindly man with plenty of means, he waved his hand, and did not exact from Velenchuk the value of the cloak. In spite of the fussy tailor's endeavors, and the tears that he shed while telling about his misfortune, the thief was not detected. Although strong suspicions were attached to a criminally desperate soldier named Chernof, who slept in the same tent with him, still there were no decisive proofs. The diplomatically dictatorial Mikhaïl Dorofeïtch, as a man of means, having various arrangements with the inspector of arms and steward of the mess, the aristocrats of the battery, quickly forgot all about the loss of that particular cloak.

Velenchuk, on the contrary, did not forget his unhappiness. The soldiers declared that at this time they were apprehensive about him, lest he should make way with himself, or flee to the mountains, so heavily did his misfortune weigh upon him. He neither ate nor drank,

was not able to work, and wept all the time. At the end of three days he appeared before Mikhaïl Dorofeïtch, and without any color in his face, and with a trembling hand, drew out of his sleeve a gold piece and gave it to him.

"Faith,[1] and here's all that I have, Mikhaïl Dorofeïtch; and this I got from Zhdanof," he said, beginning to sob again. "I will give you two more rubles, truly I will, when I have earned them. He [who the *he* was, Velenchuk himself did not know] made me seem like a rascal in your eyes. He, the beastly viper, stole from a brother soldier his hard earnings; and here I have been in the service fifteen years." ....

To the honor of Mikhaïl Dorofeïtch, it must be said that he did not require of Velenchuk the last two rubles, though Velenchuk brought them to him at the end of two months.

CHAPTER III

Five other soldiers of my platoon besides Velenchuk were warming themselves around the bonfire.

In the best place, away from the wind, on a cask, sat the platoon artillerist[2] Maksimof, smoking his pipe. In the posture, the gaze, and all the motions of this man, it could be seen that he was accustomed to command, and was conscious of his own worth, even if nothing were said about the cask whereon he sat, which during the halt seemed to become the emblem of power, or the nankeen short-coat he wore.

When I approached, he turned his head round toward me; but his eyes remained fixed on the fire, and only after some time did they follow the direction of his face, and rest on me. Maksimof came from a semi-noble family.[3] He had property, and in the school

[1] *Yeï Bogu;* literally, By God.

[2] *Feïerverker;* German, *Feuerwerker.*

[3] *Odnodvortsui*, of one estate; freemen, who in the seventeenth century were settled in the Ukraïna with special privileges.

brigade he obtained rank, and acquired some learning. According to the reports of the soldiers, he was fearfully rich and fearfully learned.

I remember how one time, when they were making practical experiments with the quadrant, he explained, to the soldiers gathered around him, that the motions of the spirit level arise from the same causes as those of the atmospheric quicksilver. In reality Maksimof was far from stupid, and knew his business admirably; but he had the bad habit of speaking, sometimes on purpose, in such a way that it was impossible to understand him, and I think he did not understand his own words. He had an especial fondness for the words "arises" and "to proceed"; and whenever he said "it arises," or "now let us proceed," then I knew in advance that I should not understand what would follow. The soldiers, on the contrary, as I had a chance to observe, enjoyed hearing his "arises," and suspected it of containing deep meaning, though, like myself, they could not understand his words. But this incomprehensibility they ascribed to their own stupidity, and they worshiped Feodor Maksimuitch accordingly. In a word, Maksimof was diplomatically dictatorial.

The second soldier near the fire, engaged in drawing on his sinewy red legs a fresh pair of stockings, was Antonof, the same bombardier Antonof who, as early as 1837, together with two others stationed by one gun without shelter, was returning the shot of the enemy, and with two bullets in his thigh continued still to serve his gun and load it.

"He would have been artillerist long before, had it not been for his character," said the soldiers; and it was true that his character was odd. When he was sober, there was no man more calm, more peaceful, more correct in his deportment; but when he had been drinking he became an entirely different man: not recognizing authority, he became quarrelsome and turbulent, and was wholly valueless as a soldier. Not more than a week before this time he got drunk at Shrovetide; and, in spite of all threats and exhortations, and

his attachment to his cannon, he kept on drinking and brawling till the first Monday in Lent. Throughout the fast, notwithstanding the order for all in the division to eat meat, he lived on hardtack alone, and in the first week he did not even take the prescribed allowance of vodka.

However, it was necessary to see this man, with short figure, tough as iron, with his stumpy bow-legs, his shiny, whiskered face, when in his cups he would take the balalaïka [1] into his strong hands, and, carelessly glancing to this side and that, play some love-song; or, with his cloak thrown over his shoulders, and the orders dangling from it, and his hands thrust into the pockets of his blue nankeen trousers, would roll along the street; it was necessary to see how his face at such a time was enlivened with an expression of martial pride, and scorn for all that did not pertain to the military, — to comprehend how absolutely impossible it was for him to compare himself at such moments with the rude or the simply insinuating servant, the Cossack, the infantry soldier, or the volunteer, or any one else who did not belong to the artillery. He quarreled and was turbulent, not so much for his own pleasure as for the sake of upholding the spirit of all soldierhood, of which he felt himself to be the representative.

The third soldier, with ear-rings in his ears, with bristling mustaches, goose-flesh, and a porcelain pipe between his teeth, crouching on his heels in front of the bonfire, was the artillery-rider Chikin. The dear man Chikin, as the soldiers called him, was a buffoon. In bitter cold, up to his knees in the mud, going without food two days at a time, on the march, on parade, undergoing instruction, the dear man always and everywhere screwed his face into grimaces, executed flourishes with his legs, and poured out such a flood of nonsense that the whole platoon would go into fits of laughter. During a halt or in camp Chikin had always around him a group of young soldiers, whom he either played fil'ka [2]

[1] Or three-stringed guitar of the Ukraïna.

[2] *Fil'ka*, a game of cards played by soldiers. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

with, or amused by telling stories about the sly soldier and the English milord, or by imitating the Tartar and the German, or simply by making his jokes, at which everybody nearly died with laughter.

It was a fact that his reputation as a joker was so widespread in the battery, that he had only to open his mouth and wink, and he would be rewarded with a universal burst of guffaws; but he really had a great gift for the comic and unexpected. In everything he had the cleverness to see something remarkable, such as never came into anybody else's head; and, what is more important, this talent for seeing something ridiculous never failed under any trial.

The fourth soldier was an awkward young fellow, a recruit of the last year's draft, and he was now serving in an expedition for the first time. He was standing in the very smoke, and so close to the fire that it seemed as if his well-worn short-coat[1] would catch on fire; but notwithstanding this, by the way in which he had flung open his coat, by his calm self-satisfied pose, with his calves arched out, it was evident that he was enjoying perfect happiness.

And finally, the fifth soldier, sitting at some little distance from the fire, and whittling a stick, was Uncle Zhdanof. Zhdanof had been in service the longest of all the soldiers in the battery, — knew all the recruits; and every one, from force of habit, called him *dy'adenka*, or little uncle. It was said that he never drank, never smoked, never played cards (not even noski), and never indulged in bad talk. All the time when military duties did not engross him he worked at his trade of shoemaking; on holidays he went to church wherever it was possible, or placed a kopek candle before the image, and read the psalter, the only book in which he cared to read. He had little to do with the other soldiers, — with those higher in rank, even though they were younger, he was coldly respectful. With his equals, since he did not drink, he had little reason for social intercourse; but he was extremely fond of recruits and

[1] *Polushubochek*, little half-shuba; a lambskin or fur jacket.

young soldiers; he always protected them, read them their lessons, and often helped them. All in the battery considered him a capitalist, because he had twenty-five rubles, which he willingly loaned to any soldier who really needed it. That same Maksimof who was now artillerist used to tell me that when, ten years before, he had come as a recruit, and the old topers among the soldiers helped him to drink up the money that he had, Zhdanof, pitying his unhappy situation, took him home with him, severely upbraided him for his behavior, even administered a beating, read him the lesson about the duties of a soldier's life, and sent him away after presenting him with a shirt (for Maksimof had n't one to his back) and a half-ruble piece.

"He made a man of me," Maksimof used to say, always with respect and gratitude in his tone. He had also taken Velenchuk's part always, ever since he came as a recruit, and had helped him at the time of his misfortune about the lost cloak, and had helped many, many others during the course of his twenty-five years' service.

In the service it was impossible to find a soldier who knew his business better, who was braver or more obedient; but he was too meek and mean-looking to be chosen as an artillerist,[1] though he had been bombardier fifteen years. Zhdanof's one pleasure, and even passion, was music. He was exceedingly fond of some songs, and he always gathered round him a circle of singers from among the young soldiers; and, though he himself could not sing, he stood with them, and, putting his hands into the pockets of his short-coat,[2] and shutting his eyes, expressed his contentment by the motions of his head and cheeks. I know not why it was, that in that regular motion of the cheeks under the mustache, a peculiarity which I never saw in any one else, I found unusual expression. His head white as snow, his mustache dyed black, and his brown, wrinkled face, gave him at first sight a stern and gloomy appearance; but as you looked more closely into his great round eyes,

[1] *Feïerverker.* [2] *Polushubok.*

especially when they smiled (he never laughed with his lips), something extraordinarily sweet and almost child-like suddenly struck you.

CHAPTER IV

"DEAR me! I have forgotten my pipe; that's a misfortune, fellows," repeated Velenchuk.

"But you should smoke *cikarettes*,[1] dear man," urged Chikin, screwing up his mouth, and winking. "I always smoke *cikarettes* at home; it's sweeter."

Of course, all joined in the laugh.

"So you forgot your pipe?" interrupted Maksimof, proudly knocking out the ashes from his pipe into the palm of his left hand, and not paying any attention to the universal laughter, in which even the officers joined. "You lost it somewhere here, didn't you, Velenchuk?"

Velenchuk wheeled to right face at him, started to lift his hand to his cap, and then dropped it again.

"You see, you haven't woke up from your last evening's spree, so that you didn't get your sleep out. For such work you deserve a good raking."[2]

"May I drop dead on this very spot, Feodor Maksimovitch, if a single drop passed my lips. I myself don't know what happened to me," replied Velenchuk. "How glad I should have been to get drunk!" he muttered to himself.

"All right. But one is responsible to the chief for one's conduct, and when you behave this way it's perfectly abominable," said the eloquent Maksimof, in a more gentle tone.

"Well, here is something strange, fellows," continued Velenchuk after a moment's silence, scratching the back of his head, and not addressing any one in particular;

[1] *Sikharki*, mispronounced diminutive of *sigara*, a cigar.

[2] Literally: For this they do not say *spasibo*, thanks, to your brother.

"fact, it's strange, fellows. I have been sixteen years in the service, and have not had such a thing happen to me. As we were told to get ready for a march, I got up, as my duty behooved. There was nothing at all, when suddenly in the 'park' *it* came over me .... came over me more and more; laid me out .... laid me out on the ground .... and everything. .... And when I got asleep, I did not hear a sound, fellows. It must have been sheer drowsiness," he said in conclusion.

"At all events, it took all my strength to wake you up," said Antonof, as he pulled on his boot. "I pushed you, and pushed you. You slept like a log."

"See here," remarked Velenchuk, "if I had been drunk ...."

"Like a peasant woman we had at home," interrupted Chikin. "For almost two years running she did not get down from the big oven. They tried to wake her up one time, for they thought she was asleep; but there she was, lying just as if she was dead; the same kind of sleep you had — is n't that so, dear man?"

"Just tell us, Chikin, how you led the fashion the time when you had leave of absence," said Maksimof, smiling, and winking at me as much as to say, "Don't you like to hear what the foolish fellow has to say?"

"How led the fashion, Feodor Maksimuitch?" asked Chikin, casting a quick side glance at me. "Of course, I merely told what kind of people we are here in the Kapkas."[1]

"Well, then, that's so, that's so. You are not a fashion leader .... but just tell us how you made them think you were commander."

"You know how I became commander for them. I was asked how we live," began Chikin, speaking rapidly, like a man who has often told the same story. "I said, 'We live well, dear man; we have plenty of victuals. At morning and night, to our delight, all we soldiers get our choco*let;*[2] and then at dinner, every sinner has his imperial soup of barley groats, and instead of vodka,

[1] *Kapkas* for *Kavkas*, Caucasus.
[2] *Shchikolata id'yot na soldata.*

M*o*deira at each plate, genuine old M*o*deira in the cask, '42!'"

"Fine M*o*deira!" replied Velenchuk, louder than the others, and with a burst of laughter. "Let 's have some of it."

"Well, then, what did you have to tell them about the *Esiatics?*" said Maksimof, carrying his inquiries still farther as the general merriment subsided.

Chikin bent down to the fire, picked up a coal with his stick, put it on his pipe, and, pretending not to notice the discreet curiosity aroused in his hearers, puffed for a long time in silence.

When at last he had raised a sufficient cloud of smoke, he threw away the coal, pushed his cap still farther on the back of his head, and, making a grimace, and with an almost imperceptible smile, he continued: "They asked," said he, "'What kind of a person is the little Cherkes yonder? or is it the Turk that you are fighting with in the Kapkas country?' I tell 'em, 'The Cherkes here with us is not of one sort, but of different sorts. Some are like the mountaineers who live on the rocky mountain-tops, and eat stones instead of bread. The biggest of them,' I say, 'are exactly like big logs, with one eye in the middle of the forehead, and they wear red caps, they glow like fire,'—just like yours, my dear fellow," he added, addressing a young recruit, who, in fact, wore an odd little cap with a red crown.

The recruit, at this unexpected sally, suddenly sat down on the ground, slapped his knees, and burst out laughing and coughing so that he could hardly command his voice to say, "That's the kind of mountaineers we have here."

"'And,' says I, 'besides, there are the *mumri*,'" continued Chikin, jerking his head so that his hat fell forward on his forehead; "'they go out in pairs like little twins,— these others. Everything comes double with them,' says I, 'and they cling hold of each other's hands, and run so *queek* that I tell you you could n't catch up with them on horseback.'—'Well,' says he, 'these *mumri* who are so small as you say, I suppose they are

born hand in hand?'" said Chikin, endeavoring to imitate the deep throaty voice of the peasant. "'Yes,' says I, 'my dear man, they are so by nature. You try to pull their hands apart, and it makes 'em bleed, just as with the Chinese: when you pull their caps off, the blood comes.' — 'But tell us,' says he, 'how they kill any one.' — 'Well, this is the way,' says I: 'they take you and they rip you all up, and they reel out your bowels in their hands. They reel 'em out and you defy them and defy them — till your soul....'"

"Well, now, did they believe anything you said, Chikin?" asked Maksimof, with a slight smile, when those standing round had stopped laughing.

"And indeed it is a strange people, Feodor Maksimuitch: they believe every one; by God, they do. But still, when I began to tell them about Mount Kazbek, and how the snow does not melt all summer there, they all burst out laughing at the absurdity of it. 'What a story!' they said. 'Could such a thing be possible, — a mountain so big that the snow does not melt on it?' And I say, 'With us when the thaw comes, there is such a heap; and even after it begins to melt, the snow lies in the hollows.' — 'Go away,'" said Chikin, with a concluding wink.

CHAPTER V

The bright disk of the sun, gleaming through the milk-white mist, had now got well up; the purple-gray horizon gradually widened; but, though the view became more extended, still it was sharply defined by the delusive white wall of the fog.

In front of us, on the other side of the forest, opened out a good-sized field. Over the field there spread from all sides the smoke from the bonfires, here black, here milk-white, here purple; and the white folds of the mist as it arose assumed strange forms. Far in the distance, from time to time, groups of mounted Tartars showed themselves; and the occasional reports from

our rifles, and from their guns and cannon, were heard.

"It was n't anything at all of an action — mere boys' play," as the worthy Captain Khlopof said.

The commander of the ninth company of Jägers, who was with us as escort, rode up to our cannon, and pointing to three mounted Tartars who were just then riding under cover of the forest, more than six hundred sazhens from us, asked me to give them a shot or a shell. His request was an illustration of the love universal among all infantry officers for artillery practice.

"You see," said he, with a kindly and convincing smile, stretching his hand across my shoulder, "where those two big trees are, right in front of us: one is on a white horse, and dressed in a black cherkeska; and directly behind him are two more. Do you see? If you please, we must...."

"And there are three others riding along under the lee of the forest," interrupted Antonof, who was distinguished for his sharp eyes, and had now joined us with the pipe that he had been smoking concealed behind his back. "The front one has just taken his carbine from its case. It 's easy to see, your excellency."

"Ha! he fired then, fellows. See the white puff of smoke," said Velenchuk, who was standing in a group of soldiers a little back of us.

"He must be aiming at us, the blackguard!" remarked some one else.

"See, those fellows only come out a little way from the forest. We see the place; we want to aim a cannon at it," suggested a third. "If we could only *blant* a *krenade* into the midst of 'em, it would scatter 'em."....

"And what makes you think you could shoot to such a *tistance*, dear man?" asked Chikin.

"Only five hundred or five hundred and twenty sazhens — it can't be less than that," said Maksimof, coolly, as if he were speaking to himself; but it was evident that he, like the others, was terribly anxious to bring the guns into play. "If the howitzer is aimed up

at an angle of forty-five degrees, then it will be possible to reach that spot; that is perfectly possible."

"You know, now, that if you aim at that group, it would infallibly hit some one. There, there! as they are riding along now, please hurry up and order the gun to be fired," continued the infantry commander, beseeching me.

"Will you give the order to unlimber the gun?" asked Antonof, suddenly, in a jerky bass voice, with a slight touch of surliness in his manner.

I confess that I myself felt a strong desire for this, and I commanded the second cannon to be unlimbered.

The words had hardly left my mouth ere the bomb was powdered and rammed home; and Antonof, clinging to the gun-cheek, and leaning his two fat fingers on the carriage, was already giving directions for getting the gun into position.

"A little .... little more to the left .... now a little to the right .... now, now the least bit more .... there, that's right," said he, with a proud face, turning from the gun.

The infantry officer, myself, and Maksimof in turn sighted along the gun, and all gave expression to various opinions.

"By God! it will miss," said Velenchuk, clicking with his tongue, although he could only see over Antonof's shoulder, and therefore had no basis for such a surmise.

"By-y-y God! it will miss; it will hit that tree right in front, fellows."

"Two!" I commanded.

The men about the gun scattered. Antonof ran to one side, so as to follow the flight of the ball. There was a flash and a ring of brass. At the same instant we were enveloped in gunpowder smoke; and, after the startling report, was heard the metallic, whizzing sound of the ball rushing off quicker than lightning, amid a general silence dying away in the distance.

Just a little behind the group of horsemen a white puff of smoke appeared; the Tartars scattered in all directions, and then the sound of a crash came to us.

"Capitally done!".... "Ah! they take to their heels." .... "See! the devils don't like it."

Such were the exclamations and jests heard among the ranks of the artillery and infantry.

"If the aim had been a trifle lower, 't would have hit right in the midst of *him*," remarked Velenchuk. "I said it would strike the tree: it did; it took the one at the right."

CHAPTER VI

Leaving the soldiers to argue about the Tartars taking to flight when they saw the shell, and why it was that they came there, and whether there were many in the forest, I went with the company commander a few steps aside, and sat down under a tree, waiting for some warmed chops which he had offered me. The company commander, Bolkhof, was one of the officers that are called in the regiment *bonjour-ui*. He had property, had previously served in the guards, and spoke French. But, in spite of this, his comrades liked him. He was rather intellectual, had tact enough to wear his Petersburg overcoat, to eat a good dinner, and to speak French without too much offending the sensibilities of his brother officers.

As we talked about the weather, about the events of the war, about the officers known to us both, and as we became convinced, by our questions and answers, by our views of things in general, that we were mutually sympathetic, we involuntarily fell into more intimate conversation. Moreover, in the Caucasus, among men who meet in one circle, the question invariably arises, though it is not always expressed, "Why are you here?" and it seemed to me that my companion was desirous of satisfying this inarticulate question.

"When will this expedition end?" he asked lazily; "it 's tiresome."

"It is n't tiresome to me," I said; "it 's much more so serving on the staff."

"Oh, on the staff it's ten thousand times worse!" said he, fiercely. "No, I mean when will this sort of thing end altogether?"

"What! do you wish that it would end?" I asked.

"Yes, all of it, altogether!.... Well, are the chops ready, Nikolaïef?" he inquired of his servant.

"Why do you serve in the Caucasus, then," I asked, "if the Caucasus does not please you?"

"You know why," he replied, with an outburst of frankness; "on account of tradition. In Russia, you see, there exists a strange tradition about the Caucasus, that it is a sort of promised land for all kinds of unfortunate people."

"Well," said I, "that is pretty nearly true; the majority of us here...."

"But what is better than all," said he, interrupting me, "is that all of us who on account of this tradition come to the Kavkas are fearfully deceived in our calculations; and really, I don't see why, in consequence of disappointment in love or disorder in one's affairs, one should come to serve in the Caucasus rather than in Kazan or Kaluga. You see, in Russia they imagine the Kavkas as something immense, — everlasting virgin ice-fields, with impetuous streams, with daggers, cloaks, Circassian girls, — all that is strange and wonderful; but in reality there is nothing gay in it at all. If they only knew, for example, that we have never been on the virgin ice-fields, and that there was nothing gay in it at all, and that the Caucasus was divided into the districts of Stavropol, Tiflis, and so forth...."

"Yes," said I, laughing, "when we are in Russia we look on the Caucasus in an absolutely different way from what we do here. Haven't you ever noticed it: when you read poetry in a language that you don't know very well, you imagine it much better than it really is, don't you?"....

"I don't know how that is, but this Kavkas disgusts me awfully," he said, interrupting me.

"It isn't so with me," I said; "the Caucasus is delightful to me now, only in a different way."....

"Maybe it is delightful," he continued, with a touch of asperity, "but I know that it is not delightful to me."

"Why so?" I asked, with a view of saying something.

"In the first place, it has deceived me — all that which I expected, from tradition, to be delivered of in the Caucasus, I find in me just the same here, only with this distinction, that before, it was all on a large scale, but now on a small and nasty scale; at every step I find millions of petty annoyances, worriments, and miseries; in the second place, because I feel that each day I am falling morally lower and lower; and principally because I feel myself incapable of service here .... I cannot endure to face the danger .... simply, I am a coward." ....

He got up and looked at me earnestly.

Though this unbecoming confession completely took me by surprise, I did not contradict him, as my messmate evidently expected me to do; but I awaited from the man himself the refutation of his words, which is always ready in such circumstances.

"You know to-day's expedition is the first time that I have taken part in action," he continued, "and you can imagine what my evening was. When the sergeant brought the order for my company to join the column, I became as pale as a sheet, and could not utter a word from emotion; and if you knew how I spent the night! If it is true that people turn gray from fright, then I ought to be perfectly white-headed to-day, because no man condemned to death ever suffered so much from terror in a single night as I did; even now, though I feel a little more at my ease than I did last night, still it goes here in me," he added, pressing his hand to his heart. "And what is absurd," he went on to say, "while this fearful drama is playing here, I myself am eating chops and onions, and trying to persuade myself that it is very gay. .... Is there any wine, Nikolaïef?" he added, with a yawn.

"There *he* is, fellows!" shouted one of the soldiers at this moment in a tone of alarm, and all eyes were fixed upon the edge of the far-off forest.

In the distance a puff of bluish smoke took shape, and, rising up, drifted away on the wind.

When I realized that the enemy were firing at us, everything that was in the range of my eyes at that moment, everything suddenly assumed a new and majestic character. The stacked muskets, and the smoke of the bonfires, and the blue sky, and the green gun-carriages, and Nikolaïef's sunburned, whiskered face, — all this seemed to tell me that the shot which had already emerged from the smoke, and was at that instant flying through space, might be directed straight at my breast.

"Where did you get the wine?" I meanwhile asked Bolkhof carelessly, while in the depths of my soul two voices were speaking with equal distinctness: one said, "Lord, take my soul in peace;" the other, "I hope I shall not duck my head, but smile while the ball is coming." And at that instant something horribly unpleasant whistled above our heads, and the shot came crashing to the ground not two paces away from us.

"Now, if I were Napoleon or Frederick the Great," said Bolkhof at this time, with perfect composure, turning to me, "I should certainly have said something graceful."

"But that you have just done," I replied, hiding with some difficulty the panic which I felt at being exposed to such a danger.

"Why, what did I say? No one will put it on record."

"I 'll put it on record."

"Yes: if you put it on record, it will be in the way of criticism, as Mishchenkof says," he replied, with a smile.

"Tfu! you devils!" exclaimed Antonof in vexation just behind us, and spitting to one side; "it just missed my leg."

All my solicitude to appear cool, and all our refined phrases, suddenly seemed to me unendurably stupid after this artless exclamation.

CHAPTER VII

The enemy, in fact, had posted two cannon on the spot where the Tartars had been scattered, and every twenty or thirty minutes sent a shot at our woodchoppers. My division was sent out into the field, and ordered to reply to him. At the skirt of the forest a puff of smoke would show itself, the report would be heard, then the whiz of the ball, and the shot would bury itself behind us or in front of us. The enemy's shots were placed fortunately for us, and no loss was sustained.

The artillerists, as always, behaved admirably, loaded rapidly, aimed carefully wherever the smoke appeared, and jested unconcernedly with each other. The infantry escort, in silent inactivity, were lying around us, awaiting their turn. The wood-cutters were busy at their work; their axes resounded through the forest more and more rapidly, more and more eagerly, save when the "svist" of a cannon-shot was heard: then suddenly the sounds ceased, and amid the deathlike stillness a voice, not altogether calm, would exclaim, "Stand aside, boys!" and all eyes would be fastened upon the shot ricochetting on the woodpiles and the brush.

The fog was now completely lifted, and, taking the form of clouds, was disappearing slowly in the dark blue vault of heaven. The unclouded orb of the sun shone bright and threw its cheerful rays on the steel of the bayonets, the brass of the cannon, on the thawing ground, and the glittering points of the icicles. The atmosphere was brisk with the morning frost and the warmth of the spring sun. Thousands of varying shades and tints mingled in the dry leaves of the forest; and on the hard shining level of the road could be seen the regular tracks of wheel-tires and horseshoes.

The action between the troops grew more and more violent and more striking. In all directions the bluish puffs of smoke from the firing became more and more frequent. The dragoons, with bannerets waving from their lances, kept riding to the front. In the infantry

companies songs resounded, and the train loaded with wood began to form itself as the rear-guard. The general rode up to our division, and ordered us to be ready for the return. The enemy took up their position in the bushes over against our left flank, and began to pour a heavy musketry fire into us. From the left-hand side a ball came whizzing from the forest, and buried itself in a gun-carriage; then a second, a third. ....

The infantry guard, scattered around us, jumped up with a shout, seized their muskets, and took aim. The cracking of the musketry was redoubled, and the bullets began to fly thicker and faster. The retreat had begun, and the present attack was the result, as is always the case in the Caucasus.

It was perfectly manifest that the artillerists did not like the bullets so well as the infantry had liked the solid shot. Antonof put on a deep frown. Chikin imitated the sound of the bullets, and fired his jokes at them; but one could see that he did not like them. In regard to one he said, "What a hurry it 's in!" another he called a "honey-bee"; a third, which flew over us with a sort of slow and lugubrious drone, he called an "orphan," — a term which raised general amusement.

The recruit, who had the habit of bending his head to one side and stretching out his neck, every time he heard a bullet, was also a source of amusement to the soldiers, who said, "Who is it? some acquaintance that you are bowing to?"

Even Velenchuk, who always showed perfect equanimity in time of danger, was now in an alarming state of mind; he was manifestly vexed because we did not send some canister in the direction from which the bullets came. He more than once exclaimed in a discontented tone, "What is *he* allowed to shoot at us with impunity for? If we could only answer with some grape, that would silence him, take my word for it."

In fact, it was time to do this. I ordered the last shell to be fired, and to load with grape.

"Grape!" shouted Antonof, bravely, in the midst of

the smoke, coming up to the gun with his sponge as soon as the discharge was made.

At this moment, not far behind us, I heard the swift buzzing sound [1] of a bullet suddenly stop as it buried itself in something with a dry thud. My heart sank within me.

"Some one of our men must have been struck," I said to myself; but at the same time, under the influence of this powerful presentiment I did not dare to turn round. In fact, immediately after this sound, the heavy fall of a body was heard, and "o-o-o-oï," — the heart-rending groan of the wounded man.

"I 'm hit, fellows," exclaimed a voice which I knew.

It was Velenchuk.

He was lying on his back between the limbers and the gun. The cartridge-box which he carried was flung to one side. His forehead was all bloody, and down from his right eye and his nose flowed a thick red stream. The wound was in his abdomen, but it bled very little; he had hit his forehead on something when he fell.

All this I perceived after some little time. At the first instant I saw only a sort of obscure mass, and a terrible quantity of blood as it seemed to me.

None of the soldiers who were loading the gun said a word, — only the recruit muttered between his teeth, "See, how bloody!" and Antonof, frowning still blacker, snorted angrily; but all the time it was evident that the thought of death presented itself to the mind of each. All took hold of their work with great activity. The gun was loaded in one instant; and the gun-captain, in getting the canister, went two steps around the place where lay the wounded man, now groaning constantly.

[1] *Zhuzhzhashchy zvuk.*

CHAPTER VIII

EVERY one who has been in action has doubtless experienced the strange although illogical but still powerful feeling of repulsion for the place in which any one has been killed or wounded. My soldiers were noticeably affected by this feeling at the first moment when it became necessary to lift Velenchuk and carry him to the wagon which had driven up. Zhdanof sternly went to the sufferer, and, notwithstanding his cry of anguish, took him under his arms and lifted him. "What are you standing there for? Help lug him!" he shouted; and instantly a dozen men sprang to his assistance, some of whom could not do any good at all. But they had scarcely started to move him from the place when Velenchuk began to scream fearfully and to struggle.

"What are you screeching for, like a rabbit?" said Antonof, clutching him roughly by the leg. "If you don't stop, we'll drop you."

And the sufferer really calmed down, and only occasionally cried out, "Okh! I'm dead! o-okh, fellows![1] I'm dead!"

As soon as they laid him in the wagon, he ceased to groan, and I heard how he said something to his comrades — it must have been a farewell — in a weak but audible voice.

Indeed, no one likes to look at a wounded man; and I, instinctively hastening to get away from this spectacle, ordered the men to take him as soon as possible to a suitable place, and then return to the guns. But in a few minutes I was told that Velenchuk was asking for me, and I returned to the ambulance.

The wounded man lay on the wagon bottom, holding the sides with both hands. His healthy, broad face had in a few seconds entirely changed; he had, as it were, grown gaunt, and older by several years. His lips were pinched and white, and tightly compressed, with evident effort at self-control. In place of the quick and anx-

[1] *Bratsui moĭ.*

ious expression in his eyes had come a peculiarly clear and tranquil gleam, and on his blood-stained forehead and nose already lay the seal of death.

In spite of the fact that the least motion caused him unendurable anguish, he was trying to take from his left leg his purse,[1] which contained money.

A fearfully burdensome thought came into my mind when I saw his bare, white, and healthy-looking leg as he was taking off his boot and untying his purse.

"There are three silver rubles and a fifty-kopek piece," he said, when I took the girdle-purse. "You keep them."

The ambulance had started to move, but he stopped it.

"I was working on a cloak for Lieutenant Sulimovsky. He had paid me two-o-o silver rubles. I spent one and a half on buttons, but half a ruble lies with the buttons in my bag. Give them to him."

"Very good, I will," said I. "Keep up good hopes, brother."

He did not answer me; the wagon moved away, and he began once more to groan, and to cry in the same terribly heartrending tone. As if he had done with earthly things, he felt that he had no longer any pretext for self-restraint, and he now considered this alleviation permissible.

CHAPTER IX

"WHERE are you off to? Come back! Where are you going?" I shouted to the recruit, who, carrying in his arms his reserve linstock, and a sort of cane in his hand, was calmly marching off toward the ambulance in which the wounded man was carried.

But the recruit lazily looked up at me, and kept on his way, and I was obliged to send a soldier to bring him

[1] *Cheres;* diminutive, *cheresok*, — a leathern purse in the form of a girdle, which soldiers wear usually under the knee. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

back. He took off his red cap, and looked at me with a stupid smile.

"Where were you going?" I asked.

"To camp."

"Why?"

"Because — they have wounded Velenchuk," he replied, smiling again.

"What has that to do with you? It's your business to stay here."

He looked at me in amazement, then coolly turned round, put on his cap, and went to his place.

The result of the action had been fortunate on the whole. The Cossacks, it was reported, had made a glorious attack, and had captured three Tartars; the infantry had laid in a store of firewood, and had suffered in all a loss of six men wounded. In the artillery, from the whole array, only Velenchuk and two horses were put *hors du combat.* Moreover, they had cut the forest for three versts, and cleared a place, so that it was impossible to recognize it; now, instead of a seemingly impenetrable forest girdle, a great field was opened up, covered with heaps of smoking bonfires, and lines of infantry and cavalry on their way to camp. Notwithstanding the fact that the enemy incessantly harassed us with cannonade and musketry fire, and followed us down to the very river where the cemetery was, that we had crossed in the morning, the retreat was successfully managed.

I was already beginning to dream of the cabbage soup and rib of mutton with kasha gruel that were awaiting me at the camp, when the word came that the general had commanded a redoubt to be thrown up on the river-bank, and that the third battalion of regiment K, and a division of the fourth battery, should stay behind till the next day for that purpose. The wagons with the firewood and the wounded, the Cossacks, the artillery, the infantry with muskets and fagots on their shoulders, — all with noise and songs passed by us. On the faces of all shone enthusiasm and content, caused by the

return from peril, and hope of rest; only we and the men of the third battalion were obliged to postpone these joyful feelings till the morrow.

CHAPTER X

While we of the artillery were busy about the guns, disposing the limbers and caissons, and picketing the horses, the foot-soldiers had stacked their arms, piled up bonfires, made shelters of boughs and cornstalks, and were cooking their porridge.

It began to grow dark. Across the sky swept bluish white clouds. The mist, changing into fine drizzling fog, began to wet the ground and the soldiers' cloaks. The horizon became contracted, and all our surroundings took on gloomy shadows. The dampness which I felt through my boots and on my neck, the incessant motion and chatter in which I took no part, the sticky mud with which my legs were covered, and my empty stomach, all combined to arouse in me a most uncomfortable and disagreeable frame of mind after a day of physical and moral fatigue. The thought of Velenchuk did not leave my mind. The whole simple story of his military life kept repeating itself before my imagination.

His last moments were as unclouded and peaceful as all the rest of his life. He had lived too honestly and simply for his artless faith in the heavenly life to come to be shaken at the decisive moment.

"Your health," said Nikolaïef, coming to me. "The captain begs you to be so kind as to come and drink tea with him."

Managing to make my way between stacks of arms and the camp-fires, I followed Nikolaïef to where Captain Bolkhof was, and felt a glow of satisfaction in dreaming about the glass of hot tea and the gay converse which should drive away my gloomy thoughts.

"Well, has he come?" said Bolkhof's voice from his cornstalk wigwam, in which the light was gleaming.

"He is here, your honor,"[1] replied Nikolaïef in his deep bass.

In the hut, on a dry *burka*, or Cossack mantle, sat the captain in *négligé*, and without his cap. Near him the samovar was singing, and a drum was standing loaded with luncheon. A bayonet stuck into the ground held a candle.

"How is this?" he said with some pride, glancing around his comfortable habitation. In fact, it was so pleasant in his wigwam, that while we were at tea I absolutely forgot about the dampness, the gloom, and Velenchuk's wound. We talked about Moscow and subjects that had no relation to the war or the Caucasus.

After one of the moments of silence which sometimes interrupt the most lively conversations, Bolkhof looked at me with a smile.

"Well, I suppose our talk this morning must have seemed very strange to you?" said he.

"No. Why should it? It only seemed to me that you were very frank; but there are things which we all know, but which it is not necessary to speak about."

"Oh, you are mistaken! If there were only some possibility of exchanging this life for any sort of life, no matter how tame and mean, but free from danger and service, I should not hesitate a minute."

"Why, then, don't you go back to Russia?" I asked.

"Why?" he repeated. "Oh, I have been thinking about that for a long time. I can't return to Russia until I have won the Anna and Vladimir, wear the Anna ribbon around my neck, and am major, as I expected when I came here."

"Why not, pray, if you feel that you are so unfitted as you say for the service here?"

"Simply because I feel still more unfitted to return to Russia the same as I came. That also is one of the traditions existing in Russia which were handed down by Passek, Sleptsof, and others, — that you must go to the Caucasus, so as to come home loaded with rewards. And all of us are expecting and working for this; but I

[1] *Vashe blagorodïe.*

have been here two years, have taken part in two expeditions, and have n't won anything. But still, I have so much vanity that I shall not go away from here until I am major, and have the Vladimir and Anna around my neck. I am already accustomed to having everything avoid me, when even Gnilokishkin gets promoted, and I don't. And so how could I show myself in Russia, before the eyes of my elder, the merchant Kotelnikof, to whom I sell wheat, or to my aunty in Moscow, and all those people, if I had served two years in the Caucasus without getting any reward? It is true that I don't wish to know these people, and, of course, they don't care very much about me; but a man is so constituted, that though I don't wish to know them, yet on account of them I am wasting my best years, and destroying all the happiness of my life, and all my future."

CHAPTER XI

At this moment the voice of the battalion commander was heard on the outside, saying: —

"Who is it with you, Nikolaï Feodorovitch?"

Bolkhof mentioned my name, and in a moment three officers came into the wigwam, — Major Kirsanof, the adjutant of his battalion, and company commander Trosenko.

Kirsanof was a short, thick-set fellow, with black mustaches, ruddy cheeks, and little oily eyes. His little eyes were the most noticeable features of his physiognomy. When he laughed, there remained of them only two moist little stars; and these little stars, together with his pursed-up lips and long neck, sometimes gave him a peculiar expression of insipidity. Kirsanof considered himself better than any one else in the regiment. The non-commissioned officers did not dispute this; and the chiefs esteemed him, although the general impression about him was that he was very dull-witted. He knew his duties, was accurate and zeal-

ous, was always in funds, kept a carriage and a cook, and, naturally enough, managed to get a fair reputation for pride.

"What are you gossiping about, Nikolaï Feodorovitch?" he asked, as he came in.

"Oh, about the delights of the service here."

But at this instant Kirsanof caught sight of me, a mere yunker; and in order to make me feel his importance, as if he had not heard Bolkhof's answer, and glancing at the drum, he asked:—

"What, were you tired, Nikolaï Feodorovitch?"

"No. You see, we...." began Bolkhof.

But once more, and it must have been the battalion commander's dignity that caused him to interrupt the answer, he put a new question:—

"Well, didn't we have a glorious action to-day?"

The adjutant of the battalion was a young ensign who had only lately been promoted from the yunker service. He was a modest and gentle young fellow, with a sensitive and good-natured face. I had met him before at Bolkhof's. The young man often came to see him. Having made him a bow, he would sit down in a corner, and for hours at a time say nothing, and only make cigarettes and smoke them; and then he would get up, make another bow, and go away.

He was the type of the poor son of a Russian noble family, who has chosen the profession of arms as the only one open to him in his circumstances, and who values above everything else in the world his official calling,—an ingenuous and lovable type, notwithstanding his absurd, indefeasible peculiarities: his tobacco-pouch, his dressing-gown, his guitar, and his mustache-brush, with which we used to picture him to ourselves. In the regiment they used to say of him that he boasted of being just but stern with his servant, and quoted him as saying, "I rarely punish; but when they drive me to it, then let 'em beware;" and they say that once, when his servant got drunk, and plundered him, and began to rail at his master, he took him to the guard-house, and commanded them to have everything ready for the

chastisement; but when he saw the preparations, he was so confused, that he could only stammer a few meaningless words: "Well, now you see, ... I might," and, thoroughly upset, he set off home, and from that time never dared to look into the eyes of his man. His comrades gave him no peace, but were always nagging him about this; and I often heard how the ingenuous lad tried to defend himself, and, blushing to the roots of his hair, avowed that it was not true, but absolutely false.

The third character, Captain Trosenko, was an old Caucasian[1] in the full acceptation of the word: that is, he was a man for whom the company under his command stood for his family; the fortress where the staff was, his home; and the song-singers his only pleasure in life, — a man for whom everything that was not Kavkas was worthy of scorn, yes, was almost unworthy of belief; everything that was Kavkas was divided into two halves, ours and not ours. He loved the first, the second he hated with all the strength of his soul. And, above all, he was a man of iron nerve, of serene bravery, of rare goodness and devotion to his comrades and subordinates, and of desperate frankness, and even insolence in his bearing, toward those who did not please him; that is, adjutants and *bonjourists*.

As he came into the wigwam, he almost bumped his head on the roof, then suddenly sank down and sat on the ground.

"Well, how is it?" said he; and suddenly becoming cognizant of my presence, and recognizing me, he got up, turning on me a troubled, serious gaze.

"Well, why were you talking about it?" asked the major, taking out his watch and consulting it, though I verily believe there was not the slightest necessity of his doing so.

"Well, he asked me why I served here."

"Of course, Nikolaï Feodorovitch wants to win distinction here, and then go home."

"Well, now, you tell us, Abram Ilyitch, why you serve in the Caucasus."

[1] *Kavkazets.*

"I? Because, as you know, in the first place we are all in duty bound to serve. What?" he added, though no one spoke. "Yesterday evening I received a letter from Russia, Nikolaï Feodorovitch," he continued, eager to change the conversation. "They write me that .... what strange questions are asked!"

"What sort of questions?" asked Bolkhof.

He turned red.

"Really, now, strange questions .... they write me, asking, 'Can there be jealousy without love?'.... What?" he asked, looking at us all.

"How so?" said Bolkhof, smiling.

"Well, you know, in Russia it's a good thing," he continued, as if his phrases followed one another in perfectly logical sequence. "When I was at Tambof in '52 I was invited everywhere, as if I were on the emperor's suite. Would you believe me, at a ball at the governor's, when I got there .... well, don't you know, I was received very cordially. The governor's wife[1] herself, you know, talked with me, and asked about the Caucasus; and so did all the rest .... why, I don't know .... they looked at my gold cap as if it were some sort of curiosity, and they asked me how I had won it, and how about the Anna and the Vladimir; and I told them all about it. .... What? .... That's why the Caucasus is good, Nikolaï Feodorovitch," he continued, not waiting for a response. "There they look on us Caucasians very kindly. A young man, you know, a staff-officer with the Anna and Vladimir, — that means a great deal in Russia. .... What?"

"You boasted a little, I imagine, Abram Ilyitch," said Bolkhof.

"He-he," came his silly laugh in reply. "You know, you have to. Yes, and didn't I feed royally those two months!"

"So it is fine in Russia, is it?" asked Trosenko, asking about Russia as if it were China or Japan.

"Yes, indeed! We drank so much champagne there in those two months, that it was a terror!"

"The idea! you? You drank lemonade probably. I

[1] *Gubernatorsha.*

should have died to show them how the Kavkazets drinks. The glory has not been won for nothing. I would show them how we drink. .... Hey, Bolkhof?" he added.

"Yes, you see, you have been already ten years in the Caucasus, uncle," said Bolkhof, "and you remember what Yermolof said; but Abram Ilyitch has been here only six."

"Ten years, indeed! almost sixteen."

"Let us have some sage-brandy, Bolkhof; it's raw, b-rr! Well?" he continued, smiling, "shall we drink, major?"

But the major was out of sorts, on account of the old captain's behavior to him at first; and now he evidently retired into himself, and took refuge in his own greatness. He began to hum some song, and again looked at his watch.

"Well, I shall never go there again," continued Trosenko, paying no heed to the peevish major. "I have got out of the habit of going about and speaking Russian. They'd ask, 'What is this wonderful creature who's come?' and the answer'd be, 'Asia.' Is n't that so, Nikolaï Feodoruitch? And so what is there for me in Russia? It's all the same, you'll get shot here sooner or later. They'll ask, 'Where is Trosenko?' 'Shot!' And down you go! What will you do then in the eighth company — heh?" he added, continuing to address the major.

"Send the officer of the day to the battalion," shouted Kirsanof, not answering the captain, though I was again compelled to believe that there was no need of his giving any orders.

"But, young man, I think that you are glad now that you are having double pay?" said the major, after a few moments' silence, addressing the adjutant of the battalion.

"Why, yes, very."

"I think that our pay is now very large, Nikolaï Feodoruitch," he went on to say. "A young man can live very comfortably, and even allow himself some little luxury."

"No, truly, Abram Ilyitch," said the adjutant, timidly: "even though we get double pay, it's only so much; and you see one must keep a horse." ....

"What is that you say, young man? I myself have been an ensign, and I know. Believe me, with care, one can live very well. But you must calculate," he added, tapping his left palm with his little finger.

"We pledge all our salary before it's due: this is the way to economize," said Trosenko, drinking down a glass of vodka.

"Well, now, you see that's the very thing. .... What?"

At this instant at the door of the wigwam appeared a white head with a flattened nose; and a sharp voice with a German accent said: —

"You there, Abram Ilyitch? The officer of the day is hunting for you."

"Come in, Kraft," said Bolkhof.

A tall form in the coat of the general's staff entered the door, and with remarkable zeal endeavored to shake hands with every one.

"Ah, my dear captain, you here too?" said he, addressing Trosenko.

The new guest, notwithstanding the darkness, rushed up to the captain and kissed him on the lips, to his extreme astonishment, and displeasure as it seemed to me.

"This is a German who wishes to be a hail fellow well met," I said to myself.

CHAPTER XII

My presumption was immediately confirmed. Captain Kraft called for some vodka, which he called corn-brandy,[1] and threw back his head, and made a terrible noise like a duck, in draining the glass.

"Well, gentlemen, we rolled about well to-day on the plains of the Chechen," he began; but, catching sight

[1] *Gorilka*, in the Malo-Russian dialect.

of the officer of the day, he immediately paused to allow the major to give his directions.

"Well, you have made the tour of the lines?"

"I have."

"Are the pickets posted?"

"They are."

"Then you may order the captain of the guard to be as alert as possible."

"I will."

The major blinked his eyes, and went into a brown study.

"Well, tell the boys to get their supper."

"That 's what they 're doing now."

"Good! then you may go. Well," continued the major, with a conciliating smile, addressing us, "we were reckoning what an officer needed; let us finish the calculation."

"We need one uniform and trousers, don't we?"

"Yes."

"That, let us suppose, would amount to fifty rubles every two years; say, twenty-five rubles a year for dress. Then for eating we need every day at least forty kopeks, don't we?"

"Yes, certainly as much as that."

"Well, I 'll call it so. Now, for a horse and saddle for remount, thirty rubles; that 's all. Twenty-five and a hundred and twenty and thirty make a hundred and seventy-five rubles. All the rest stands for luxuries, — for tea and for sugar and for tobacco, — twenty rubles. Will you look it over? .... It 's right, is n't it, Nikolaï Feodoruitch?"

"Not quite. Excuse me, Abram Ilyitch," said the adjutant, timidly, "nothing is left for tea and sugar. You reckon one suit for every two years, but here in field-service you can't get along with one pair of pantaloons! And boots? Why, I wear out a new pair almost every month. And then linen, shirts, handkerchiefs, and leg-wrappers; all that sort of thing one has to buy. And when you have accounted for it, there is n't anything left at all. That 's true, by God![1] Abram Ilyitch."

[1] *Yei Bogu.*

"Yes, it's splendid to wear leg-wrappers," said Kraft, suddenly, after a moment's silence, with a loving emphasis on the word *podviortki*, "leg-wrappers"; "you know it's simply Russian fashion."

"I will tell you," remarked Trosenko, "however you reckon it, it all amounts to this, that our brother imagines that we have nothing to eat; but the fact is, that we all live, and drink tea, and smoke tobacco, and drink our vodka. If you served with me," he added, addressing the ensign, "you would soon learn how to live. I suppose you gentlemen know how he treated his denshchik?"

And Trosenko, dying with laughter, told us the whole story of the ensign and his man, though we had all heard it a thousand times.

"What makes you look so rosy, brother?" he continued, pointing to the ensign, who turned red, broke into a perspiration, and smiled with such constraint that it was painful to look at him.

"It's all right, brother. I used to be just like you; but now, you see, I have become hardened. Just let any young fellow come here from Russia, — we have seen 'em, — and here they would get all sorts of rheumatism and spasms; but look at me sitting here: it's my home, and bed, and all. You see".... here he drank still another glass of vodka. "Hah?" he continued, looking straight into Kraft's eyes.

"That's what I like in you. He's a genuine old Kavkazets. Kive us your hant."

And Kraft pushed through our midst, rushed up to Trosenko, and, grasping his hand, shook it with remarkable feeling.

"Yes, we can say that we have had all sorts of experiences here," he continued. "In '45 you must have been there, captain? Do you remember the night of the 24th and 25th, when we camped in mud up to our knees, and the next day went against the intrenchments? I was then with the commander-in-chief, and in one day we captured fifteen intrenchments. Do you remember, captain?"

Trosenko nodded assent, and, pushing out his lower lip, closed his eyes.

"You ought to have seen," Kraft began, with extraordinary animation, making awkward gestures with his arms, and addressing the major.

But the major, who must have more than once heard this tale, suddenly threw such an expression of muddy stupidity into his eyes, as he looked at his comrade, that Kraft turned from him, and addressed Bolkhof and me, alternately looking at each of us. But he did not once look at Trosenko, from one end of his story to the other.

"You ought to have seen how, in the morning, the commander-in-chief came to me, and says, 'Kraft, take those intrenchments.' You know our military duty, — no arguing, hand to vizor. 'It shall be done, your excellency,'[1] and I started. As soon as we came to the first intrenchment, I turn round, and shout to the soldiers, 'Poys, show your mettle! Pe on your guard! The one who stops I shall cut down with my own hand.' With Russian soldiers you know you have to be plain-spoken. Then suddenly comes a shell .... I look .... one soldier, two soldiers, tree soldiers, then the bullets .... vz-zhin! vz-zhin! vz-zhin! I shout, 'Forward, poys, follow me!' As soon as we reach it, you know, I look and see .... how it .... you know: what do you call it?" and the narrator waved his hands in his search for the word.

"Rampart," suggested Bolkhof.

"No. .... Ach! what is it? Mein Gott, now, what is it? .... Yes, rampart," said he, quickly. "Then, clubbing their guns! .... hurrah! ta-ra-ta-ta-ta! The enemy — not a soul was left. Do you know, they were amazed. All right. We rush on .... the second intrenchment. This was quite a different affair. Our hearts poiled within us, you know. As soon as we got there, I look, and I see the second intrenchment — impossible to mount it. There .... what was it .... what was it we just called it? Ach! what was it?" ....

[1] *Slushaĭu, vashe Siyatelstvo.*

"Rampart," again I suggested.

"Not at all," said he, with some heat. "Not rampart. Ah, now, what is it called?" and he made a sort of despairing gesture with his hand. "Ach! mein Gott! what is it?" ....

He was evidently so troubled, that one could not help offering suggestions.

"Moat, perhaps," said Bolkhof.

"No; simply rampart. As soon as we reached it, if you will believe me, there was a fire poured in upon us .... it was hell." ....

At the crisis, some one behind the wigwam inquired for me. It was Maksimof. As there still remained thirteen of the intrenchments to be taken in the same monotonous detail, I was glad to have an excuse to go to my division. Trosenko went with me.

"It 's all a pack of lies," he said to me when we had gone a few steps from the wigwam. "He wasn't at the intrenchments at all;" and Trosenko laughed so good-naturedly, that I could not help joining him.

CHAPTER XIII

It was already dark night, and the camp was lighted only by the flickering bonfires, when I, after giving my orders, rejoined my soldiers. A great smoldering log was lying on the coals. Around it were sitting only three of the men, — Antonof, who had set his kettle on the fire to boil his *ryabko*[1]; Zhdanof, thoughtfully poking the ashes with a stick; and Chikin, with his pipe, which was forever in his mouth.

The rest had already turned in, some under gun-carriages, others in the hay, some around the fires. By the faint light of the coals I recognized the backs, the legs, and the heads of those whom I knew. Among the latter was the recruit, who, curled up close to the fire, seemed to be already fast asleep. Antonof made

[1] *Ryabko*, a military mess — soaked hardtack and tallow. — AUTHOR'S NOTE.

room for me. I sat down by him, and began to smoke a cigarette. The odor of the mist and of the smoke from the wet branches spreading through the air made one's eyes smart, and the same penetrating drizzle fell from the gloomy sky.

Behind us could be heard regular snoring, the crackling of wood in the fire, muffled conversation, and occasionally the clank of muskets among the infantry. Everywhere about us the watch-fires were glowing, throwing their red reflections within narrow circles on the dark forms of the soldiers. Around the nearer fires, I distinguished, in places where it was light, the figures of naked soldiers waving their shirts in the very flames. Many of the men had not yet gone to bed, but were wandering around, and talking over a space of fifteen square sazhens[1]; but the thick, gloomy night imparted a peculiarly mysterious tone to all this movement, as if each felt this gloomy silence, and feared to disturb its peaceful harmony. When I spoke, it seemed to me that my voice sounded strange. On the faces of all the soldiers sitting by the fire I read the same mood. I thought that, when I joined them, they were talking about their wounded comrade; but it was nothing of the sort. Chikin was telling about the condition of things at Tiflis, and about school-children there.

Always and everywhere, especially in the Caucasus, I have remarked in our soldiery at the time of danger peculiar tact in ignoring or avoiding those things that might have a depressing effect on their comrades' spirits. The spirit of the Russian soldier is not constituted like the courage of the Southern nations, for quickly kindled and quickly cooling enthusiasm; it is as hard to set him on fire as it is to cause him to lose courage. For him it is not necessary to have accessories, speeches, martial shouts, songs, and drums; on the contrary, he wants calmness, order, and avoidance of everything unnatural. In the Russian, the genuine Russian soldier, you never find braggadocio, bravado, or the tendency to get demoralized or excited

[1] A *sazhen* is seven feet.

in time of danger; on the contrary, discretion, simplicity, and the faculty of seeing in peril something quite distinct from the peril, constitute the distinguishing traits of his character.

I have seen a soldier wounded in the leg, at the first moment mourning only over the hole in his new sheepskin polushubok; a messenger thrown from his horse, which was killed under him, unbuckling the girth so as to save the saddle. Who does not recollect the incident at the siege of Hergebel when the fuse of a loaded bomb was on fire in the powder-room, and the artillerist ordered two soldiers to take the bomb and fling it over the wall, and how the soldiers did not take it to the most convenient place, which was near the colonel's tent on the rampart, but carried it farther, lest it should wake the gentlemen who were asleep in the tent, and both of them were blown to pieces?

I remember that, during this same expedition of 1852, one of the young soldiers, during action, said to some one that he did not believe the division would come out of it, and how the whole division in scorn went for him for saying such shameful words that they would not even repeat them.

Here, when now the thought of Velenchuk must have been in the mind of each, and when any second might bring on us the broadside of the stealthy Tartars, all were listening to Chikin's lively story, and no one mentioned the events of the day, nor the present danger, nor their wounded friend, as if it had happened God knows how long ago, or had never been at all. But still, it seemed to me their faces were more serious than usual; they listened with too little attention to Chikin's tale, and even Chikin himself felt that they were not listening to him, but that he was talking to himself.

Maksimof came to the bonfire, and sat down by me. Chikin made room for him, stopped talking, and again began to suck at his pipe.

"The infantry have sent to camp for some vodka," said Maksimof, after a considerably long silence. "They'll be back with it very soon." He spat into the

fire. "A subaltern was saying that he had seen our comrade."

"Was he still alive?" asked Antonof, turning his kettle round.

"No, he is dead."

The recruit suddenly raised above the fire his graceful head within his red cap, for an instant gazed intently at Maksimof and me, then quickly dropped it, and rolled himself up in his cloak.

"You see, it was death that was coming on him this morning when I woke him in the gun-park," said Antonof.

"Nonsense!" said Zhdanof, turning over the smoldering log; and all were silent.

Amid the general silence a shot was heard behind us in the camp. Our drummers took it up immediately, and beat the tattoo. When the last roll had ceased, Zhdanof was already up, and the first to take off his cap. The rest of us followed his example.

Amid the deep silence of the night a choir of harmonious male voices resounded: —

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, as on earth, so in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

"It was just so with us in '45; one man was contused in this place," said Antonof, when we had put on our hats and were sitting round the fire again, "and so we carried him two days on the gun..... Do you remember Shevchenko, Zhdanof?.... We left him there under a tree."

At this time a foot-soldier with enormous whiskers and mustaches, carrying a gun and a knapsack, came to our fire.

"Please give a fellow-countryman a coal for his pipe," said he.

"Of course, smoke away; there is plenty of fire," remarked Chikin.

"You were talking about Dargi, were n't you, friend?" asked the soldier, addressing Antonof.

The soldier shook his head, frowned, and squatted down near us on his heels.

"There were all sorts of things there," he remarked.

"Why did you leave him?" I asked of Antonof.

"He had awful pains in his belly. When we stood still, he did not feel it; but when we moved, he screeched and screeched. He besought us by all that was holy to leave him; it was pitiful. Well, and when *he* began to vex us sorely, and had killed three of our men at the guns and one officer, then our batteries opened on him, and did some execution too. We were n't able to drag out the guns .... there was such mud."

"It was worse under the Indian mountains than anywhere else," remarked one of the soldiers.

"Well, but indeed it kept growing worse and worse for him and Anoshenka — he was an old artillerist — and I decided that indeed there was no chance for him but to say a prayer, and so we left him there. And so we decided. A tree grew there, welcome enough. We left some hardtack for him, — Zhdanof had some, — put him against the tree, put a clean shirt on him, said good-by to him, and so we left him."

"Was he a man of importance?"

"Not at all; he was a soldier," remarked Zhdanof.

"And what became of him, God knows," added Antonof. "Many of our brothers were left there."

"At Dargi?" asked the infantryman, standing up and picking up his pipe, and again frowning and shaking his head. .... "There were all sorts of things there."

And he left us.

"Say, are there many of the soldiers in our battery who were at Dargi?" I asked.

"Let us see; here is Zhdanof, myself, Patsan, — who is now on furlough, — and there 's some six men more. There would n't be any others."

"Why has our Patsan gone off on furlough?" asked Chikin, shaking out his legs, and laying his head on a log. "It 's almost a year since he went."

"Well, have n't you had your year's furlough?" I asked of Zhdanof.

"No, I 've not," he replied reluctantly.

"I tell you it 's a good thing to go," said Antonof, "when you come from a rich home, or when you are able to work; and it 's rather flattering to go and have the folks glad to see you."

"But how about going when you have a brother," asked Zhdanof, "and would have to be supported by him? They have enough for themselves, but there 's nothing for a poor fellow who 's a soldier. Wretched kind of help after serving twenty-five years. Besides, whether they are alive or no, who knows?"

"But why have n't you written?" I asked.

"Written? I did send two letters, but they don't reply. Either they are dead, or they don't reply because, of course, they are poor. It 's so everywhere."

"Have you written lately?"

"When we left Dargi I wrote my last letter."

"You had better sing that song about the little birch tree," said Zhdanof to Antonof, who at this moment was on his knees, and purring some song.

Antonof sang his "Song of the White Birch."

"That 's Uncle Zhdanof's very most favorite song," said Chikin to me, in a whisper, pulling me by my coat. "The other day, as Filipp Antonuitch was singing it, he actually cried."

Zhdanof at first sat absolutely motionless, with his eyes fastened on the smoldering embers, and his face, shining in the ruddy glow, seemed extraordinarily gloomy; then his cheek under his mustaches began to move quicker and quicker; and at last he got up, and, spreading out his cloak, he lay down in the shadow behind the fire. Either he tossed about and groaned as he got ready for bed, or the death of Velenchuk and this wretched weather had completely upset me; but it certainly seemed to me that he was weeping.

The bottom of the log, which had been rolled on the fire, occasionally blazing up, threw its light on Antonof's form, with his gray mustache, his red face, and the

ribbons on the cloak flung over his shoulders, and brought into relief the boots, heads, or backs of other sleeping soldiers.

From above the same melancholy drizzle was falling; in the atmosphere was the same odor of dampness and smoke; around us could be seen the same bright dots of the dying fires, and amid the general silence the melancholy notes of Antonof's song rang out. And when this ceased for a moment, the faint nocturnal sounds of the camp, the snoring, the clank of the sentinel's musket, and quiet conversation, seemed to repeat it.

"Second watch! Makatiuk and Zhdanof," shouted Maksimof.

Antonof ceased to sing; Zhdanof arose, drew a deep sigh, stepped across the log, and went off quietly to the guns.

June 27, 1855.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

PRINCE NEKHLIUDOF RELATES HOW, DURING AN EXPEDITION IN THE CAUCASUS, HE MET AN ACQUAINTANCE FROM MOSCOW

OUR division was out in the field.

The work in hand was accomplished; we had made a clearing in the forest, and each day we were expecting from headquarters orders for our return to the fort. Our division of field-pieces was stationed at the top of a steep mountain crest which was terminated by the swift mountain river Mechik, and had to sweep with cannon-shot the plain that stretched before us. Here and there on this picturesque plain, out of the reach of gunshot, now and then, especially at evening, harmless groups of mounted mountaineers showed themselves, attracted by curiosity to ride up and view the Russian camp.

The evening was clear, mild, and fresh, as it generally is in December in the Caucasus; the sun was setting behind the steep spur of the mountains at the left, and threw rosy rays on the tents scattered over the slope, on the soldiers moving about, and on our two guns, which seemed to crane out their necks as they rested, motionless, on the earthwork two paces from us. The infantry picket, stationed on the knoll at the left, stood in perfect silhouette against the light of the sunset; no less distinct were the stacks of muskets, the form of the sentry, the groups of soldiers, and the smoke of the smoldering camp-fire.

At the right and left of the slope, on the black, sodden earth, the tents gleamed white; and behind the tents, black stood the bare trunks of the chinar trees,

which rang with the incessant sound of axes, the crackling of the bonfires, and the crashing of the trees as they fell under the axes. The bluish smoke arose from tobacco-pipes on all sides, and vanished into the transparent azure of the frosty sky.

Past the tents, and on the lower ground around the arms, rushed the Cossacks, dragoons, and artillerists, with great galloping and snorting of horses, as they returned from getting water. It began to freeze; all sounds were heard with extraordinary distinctness, and one could see an immense distance across the plain through the clear, rare atmosphere.

The groups of the enemy, no longer arousing the curiosity of the soldiers, quietly galloped off across the fields, still yellow with the golden corn-stubble, toward their *auls*, or villages, which were visible beyond the forest, with the tall posts of the cemeteries, and the smoke, rising in the air.

Our tent was pitched not far from the guns, on a place high and dry, from which we had a remarkably extended view. Near the tent, on a cleared space, around the battery itself, we had our games of chushki and skittles. The obliging soldiers had made for us rustic benches and tables. On account of all these conveniences the artillery officers, our comrades, and a few infantrymen liked to come together at our battery, and they called the place the club.

The evening was fine, the best players had collected, and we were amusing ourselves with *gorodki*, or skittles. Ensign D., Lieutenant O., and I had played two games in succession; and to the common satisfaction and amusement of all the spectators, — officers, soldiers, and servants,[1] — who were watching us from their tents, we had twice carried the winning party on our backs from one end of the ground to the other. Especially droll was the situation of the huge, fat Captain S., who, puffing and smiling good-naturedly, with legs dragging on the ground, rode pickapack on the feeble little Lieutenant O.

[1] *Denshchiki.*

But when it was now somewhat later, the servants brought three glasses of tea for the six men of us, and not a saucer; and we who had finished our game came to the plaited benches.

There was standing near them a small bow-legged man, a stranger to us, in a sheepskin tulup, and a *papakha*, or Circassian cap, with long, overhanging white crown. As soon as we came near where he stood, he several times irresolutely took off his cap, and put it on again; and several times he seemed to make up his mind to come to meet us, and then stopped again. But after deciding, probably, that it was impossible to remain unobserved, the stranger took off his cap, and, going in a circuit around us, approached Captain S.

"Ah, Guskantini, how is it, old man?"[1] said S., still smiling good-naturedly under the influence of his ride.

Guskantini, as S. called him, instantly replaced his cap, and made a motion to thrust his hands into the pockets of his jacket[2]; but on the side toward me there was no pocket in the jacket, and his small red hand hung in an awkward position. I felt a strong desire to make out who this man was — was he a yunker, or a degraded officer? — and, not realizing that my gaze — that is, the gaze of a strange officer — disconcerted him, I continued to stare at his dress and appearance.

I judged that he was about thirty. His small, round, gray eyes had a sleepy expression, and at the same time gazed restlessly out from under the dirty white lambskin of his cap, which hung down over his face. His thick, irregular nose, standing out between his sunken cheeks, gave evidence of emaciation that was the result of illness, and not natural. His lips, barely covered by a sparse, soft, whitish mustache, were constantly changing their shape, as if they were trying to assume now one expression, now another. But all these expressions seemed to be endless; yet his face retained one predominating expression of haste and fright. Around his thin

[1] *Nu chto, batenka; batenka* is a Malo-Russian diminutive.
[2] *Polushubok*, little half-shuba; a fur or sheepskin jacket.

neck, where the veins stood out, was tied a green woolen scarf tucked into his jacket. His short *polushubok*, or jacket, was worn bare, and had dog-fur sewed on the collar and on the false pockets. The trousers were checkered, of ash-gray color, and his shoes had short, unblacked military bootlegs.

"I beg of you, do not disturb yourself," said I, when he, for the second time, timidly glancing at me, had taken off his cap.

He bowed to me with an expression of gratitude, replaced his hat, and, drawing from his pocket a dirty calico tobacco-pouch with lacings, began to roll a cigarette.

I myself had not been long a yunker, an elderly yunker; and as I was incapable, as yet, of being good-naturedly serviceable to my younger comrades, and as I had no means, I well knew all the moral difficulties of this situation for a proud man no longer young and I sympathized with all men who found themselves in such a situation, and I endeavored to make clear to myself their character and rank, and the tendencies of their intellectual peculiarities, in order to judge of the degree of their moral sufferings. This yunker or degraded officer, judging by his restless eyes and that expectant and perpetual variation of expression which I noticed in him, was a man very far from stupid, and extremely egotistical, and therefore much to be pitied.

Captain S. invited us to play another game of gorodki, the stakes to consist, not only of the usual pickapack ride of the winning party, but also of a few bottles of red wine, rum, sugar, cinnamon, and cloves for the mulled wine which that winter, on account of the cold, was greatly popular in our division.

Guskantini, as S. again called him, was also invited to take part; but before the game began, the man, struggling between the gratification afforded him by the invitation and a certain timidity, drew Captain S. aside, and began to say something in a whisper. The good-natured captain punched him in the ribs with his big, fat hand, and replied, loud enough to be heard: —

"Not at all, old fellow,[1] I assure you."

When the game was over, and that side in which the stranger whose rank was so low had taken part, had come out winnners, and it fell to his lot to ride on one of our officers, Ensign D., the ensign grew red in the face; he went to the little divan and offered the stranger a cigarette by way of a compromise.

While they were ordering the mulled wine, and in the steward's tent were heard assiduous preparations on the part of Nikita, who had sent an orderly for cinnamon and cloves, and the shadow of his back was alternately lenthening and shortening on the dingy sides of the tent, we men, seven in all, sat around on the benches; and while we took turns in drinking tea from the three glasses, and gazed out over the plain, which was now beginning to glow in the twilight, we talked and laughed over the various incidents of the game.

The stranger in the sheepskin took no share in the conversation, obstinately refused to drink the tea which I several times offered him, and as he sat there on the ground in Tartar fashion, occupied himself in making cigarettes of fine-cut tobacco, and smoking them one after another, evidently not so much for his own satisfaction as to give himself the appearance of a man with something to do.

When it was remarked that the summons to return was expected on the morrow, and that there might be an engagement, he got up on his knees, and, addressing Captain S. only, said that he was now living at the adjutant's, and had himself written the order for the return on the next day. We all said nothing while he was speaking; and, notwithstanding the fact that he seemed so bashful, we begged him to repeat this most interesting piece of news. He repeated what he had said, adding only that he had been staying at the adjutant's (since he made it his home there) when the order came.

"Look here, old fellow,[1] if you are not telling us a lie, I shall have to go to my company and give some orders for to-morrow," said Captain S.

[1] *Batenka*, little father.

"No .... why ... it may be, I am sure ...." stammered the stranger, but suddenly stopped, and, apparently feeling himself affronted, contracted his brows unnaturally, and, muttering something between his teeth, began to roll another cigarette. But he found that he had emptied his calico bag of the fine-cut tobacco and that there was not enough, so he asked S. to favor him with a little cigarette.[1]

We kept on for a considerable time with that monotonous military chatter which every one who has ever been on an expedition will appreciate; all of us, with one and the same expression, complaining of the dullness and length of the expedition, in one and the same fashion sitting in judgment on our superiors, and all of us likewise, as we had done many times before, praising one comrade, pitying another, wondering how much this one had gained, how much that one had lost, and so on, and so on.

"Here, fellows, this adjutant of ours is completely broken up," said Captain S. "At headquarters he was everlastingly on the winning side; no matter whom he sat down with, he'd rake in everything; but now for two months past he has been losing all the time. The present expedition hasn't been lucky for him. I think he has got away with two thousand silver rubles and five hundred rubles' worth of articles, — the carpet that he won at Mukhin's, Nikitin's pistols, Sada's gold watch which Vorontsof gave him. He has lost it all."

"He's got his deserts," said Lieutenant O.: "he used to cheat everybody; it was impossible to play with him."

"He's cheated every one, but now it's all gone up in his pipe;" and here Captain S. laughed good-naturedly. "Our friend Guskof here lives with him. He hasn't gambled *him* away yet; that's so, is n't it, old fellow[2]?" he asked, addressing Guskof.

Guskof laughed. It was a melancholy, sickly laugh, which completely changed the expression of his counte-

[1] *Papirosotchka*, diminished diminutive of *papiroska*, from *papirosa*.
[2] *Batenka*.

nance. Till this moment it had seemed to me that I had seen and known this man before; and, besides, the name Guskof, by which Captain S. called him, was familiar to me; but how and when I had seen and known him, I really could not remember.

"Yes," said Guskof, who kept putting his hand to his mustaches, but instantly dropping it again without touching them. "Pavel Dmitrievitch's luck has been against him in this expedition, such a *veine de malheur*," he added, in a careful but pure French pronunciation, again giving me to think that I had seen him, and seen him often, somewhere. "I know Pavel Dmitrievitch very well. He has great confidence in me," he proceeded to say; "he and I are old friends; that is, he is fond of me," he explained, evidently fearing that it might be taken as presumption for him to claim old friendship with the adjutant. "Pavel Dmitrievitch plays admirably; but now, strange as it may seem, it's all up with him, he is just about perfectly ruined; *la chance a tourné*," he added, addressing himself particularly to me.

At first we had listened to Guskof with condescending attention; but as soon as he made use of that second French phrase, we all involuntarily turned from him.

"I have played with him a thousand times, and we agreed then that it was strange," said Lieutenant O., with peculiar emphasis on the word *strange*.[1] "I never once won a ruble from him. Why was it, when I used to win of others?"

"Pavel Dmitrievitch plays admirably; I have known him for a long time," said I.

In fact, I had known the adjutant for several years; more than once I had seen him in the full swing of a game, surrounded by officers, and I had remarked his handsome, rather gloomy and always passionless, calm face, his deliberate Malo-Russian pronunciation, his handsome equipment and horses, his bold, manly figure, and above all his skill and self-restraint in carrying on

[1] *Stranno.*

the game accurately and agreeably. More than once, I am sorry to say, as I looked at his plump white hands, with a diamond ring on the index-finger, dealing out one card after another, I grew angry with that ring, with his white hands, with the whole of the adjutant's person, and evil thoughts on his account arose in my mind.

But as I afterwards reconsidered the matter coolly, I persuaded myself that he played more skilfully than all with whom he happened to play; the more so, because as I heard his general observations concerning the game, — how one ought not to back out when one had laid the smallest stake, how one ought not to leave off in certain cases as the first rule for honorable men, and so forth, and so forth, — it was evident that he was always on the winning side merely from the fact that he played more sagaciously and coolly than the rest of us. And now it seemed that this self-reliant, careful player had been stripped not only of his money but of his effects, which marks the lowest depths of loss for an officer.

"He always had devilish good luck with me," said Lieutenant O. "I made a vow never to play with him again."

"What a marvel you are, old fellow!" said S., nodding at me, and addressing O. "You lost three hundred silver rubles, that's what you lost to him."

"More than that," said the lieutenant, savagely.

"And now you have come to your senses; it is rather late in the day, old man, for the rest of us have known for a long time that he was the cheat of the regiment," said S., with difficulty restraining his laughter, and feeling very well satisfied with his fabrication. "Here is Guskof right here, — he *fixes* his cards for him. That's the reason of the friendship between them, old man."[1] ....

And Captain S., shaking all over, burst out into such a hearty "ha, ha, ha!" that he spilt the glass of mulled wine which he was holding in his hand. On Guskof's pale, emaciated face there showed something like a

[1] *Batenka moï.*

color; he opened his mouth several times, raised his hands to his mustaches and once more dropped them to his side where the pockets should have been, stood up, and then sat down again, and finally in an unnatural voice said to S.: —

"It's no joke, Nikolaï Ivanovitch, for you to say such things before people who don't know me and who see me in this unlined jacket .... because ...."

His voice failed him, and again his small red hands with their dirty nails went from his jacket to his face, touching his mustache, his hair, his nose, rubbing his eyes, or needlessly scratching his cheek.

"As to saying that, everybody knows it, old fellow," continued S., thoroughly satisfied with his jest, and not heeding Guskof's emotion.

Guskof was still trying to say something; and, placing the palm of his right hand on his left knee in a most unnatural position, and gazing at S., he had an appearance of smiling contemptuously.

"No," said I to myself, as I noticed that smile of his, "I have not only seen him, but have spoken with him somewhere."

"You and I have met somewhere," said I to him, when, under the influence of the common silence, S.'s laughter began to calm down. Guskof's mobile face suddenly lighted up, and his eyes for the first time, with a truly joyous expression, rested on me.

"Why, I recognized you immediately," he replied in French. "In '48 I had the pleasure of meeting you quite frequently in Moscow at my sister's, Madame Ivashin's."

I apologized for not recognizing him at first in that costume and in that new garb. He arose, came to me, and with his moist hand irresolutely and weakly seized my hand, and sat down by me. Instead of looking at me, though he apparently seemed so glad to see me, he gazed with an expression of unfriendly bravado at the officers.

Either because I recognized in him a man whom I had met a few years before in a dress-coat in a draw-

ing-room, or because he was suddenly raised in his own opinion by the fact of being recognized, — at all events it seemed to me that his face and even his motions completely changed: they now expressed lively intelligence, a childish self-satisfaction in the consciousness of such intelligence, and a certain contemptuous indifference; so that I confess, notwithstanding the pitiable position in which he found himself, my old acquaintance did not so much excite sympathy in me as it did a sort of hostile sentiment.

I now vividly remembered our first meeting. In 1848, while I was staying at Moscow, I frequently went to the house of Ivashin, who had been an old friend of mine from childhood. His wife was an agreeable hostess, a charming woman, as everybody said; but she never pleased me. ....

The winter I knew her, she often spoke with hardly concealed pride of her brother, who had shortly before completed his course, and promised to be one of the most cultivated and popular young men in the best society of Petersburg. As I knew by reputation the father of the Guskofs, who was very rich and occupied an important position, and as I knew also the sister's ways, I felt some prejudice against meeting the young man.

One evening when I was at Ivashin's, I saw a short, thoroughly pleasant-looking young man, in a black dress-coat, white waistcoat and necktie. My host hastened to make me acquainted with him. The young man, evidently dressed for a ball, with his hat in his hand, was standing before Ivashin, and was eagerly but politely arguing with him about a common friend of ours, who had distinguished himself at the time of the Hungarian campaign. He said that this acquaintance was not at all a hero or a man born for war, as was said of him, but was simply a clever and cultivated man. I recollect, I took part in the argument against Guskof, and went to the extreme of declaring even that intellect and cultivation always bore an inverse relation to bravery; and I recollect how Guskof pleasantly and cleverly pointed out to me that bravery was

necessarily the result of intellect and a decided degree of development, — a statement which I, who considered myself an intellectual and cultivated man, could not in my heart of hearts agree with.

I recollect that toward the close of our conversation Madame Ivashin introduced me to her brother; and he, with a condescending smile, offered me his little hand on which he had not yet had time to draw his lavender kid glove, and weakly and irresolutely pressed my hand as he did now. Though I had been prejudiced against Guskof, I could not help granting that he was in the right, and agreeing with his sister that he was really a clever and agreeable young man, who ought to have great success in society.

He was extraordinarily neat, beautifully dressed, and fresh, and had self-confidently modest manners, and a thoroughly youthful, almost childish appearance, on account of which, you could not help pardoning him for an expression of conceit and a desire to temper his superiority over you, which were constantly manifested in his intellectual face and especially his smile.

It was said that he had enjoyed great success that winter with the ladies of Moscow. As I saw him at his sister's I could only infer how far this was true by the look of happiness and satisfaction which he constantly wore, and by his sometimes indiscreet anecdotes.

He and I met half a dozen times, and talked a good deal; or, rather, he talked a good deal, and I listened. He spoke for the most part in French, with a thoroughly good accent, very fluently and ornately; and he had the skill of drawing others gently and politely into the conversation. As a general thing, he behaved toward all, and toward me, somewhat condescendingly, and I felt that he was perfectly right in this way of treating people. I always feel that way in regard to men who are firmly convinced that they ought to treat me condescendingly, and who are comparative strangers to me.

Now, as he sat with me, and gave me his hand, I distinctly recognized in him that same old haughtiness of expression; and it seemed to me that he did not prop-

erly appreciate his position of official inferiority before an officer, he asked me with such nonchalance what I had been doing in all that time, and how I happened to be there. In spite of the fact that I invariably made my replies in Russian, he kept talking in French, expressing himself remarkably well, but not so fluently as in days gone by. About himself he remarked casually that after his unhappy, wretched story (what the story was, I did not know, and he had not told me), he had been three months under arrest, and then had been sent to the Caucasus to the N. regiment, and had now been serving three years as a soldier in that regiment.

"You would not believe," said he to me in French, "how much I have to suffer in these regiments from the society of the officers. Still, it is a pleasure to me that I used to know the adjutant of whom we were just speaking; he is a good man .... it 's a fact," he remarked condescendingly. "I live with him, and that 's something of a relief for me. Yes, my dear, the days fly by, but they are n't all alike,"[1] he added; and suddenly hesitated, reddened, and stood up, as he caught sight of the adjutant himself coming toward us.

"It is such a pleasure to meet such a man as you," said Guskof to me in a whisper, as he turned from me; "I should like very, very much to have a long talk with you."

I said that I should be very happy to talk with him, but in reality I confess that Guskof excited in me a sort of dull pity which was not akin to sympathy.

I had a presentiment that I should feel a constraint in a private conversation with him; but still I was anxious to learn from him several things, and, above all, why it was, when his father had been so rich, that he was in poverty, as was evident by his dress and appearance.

The adjutant greeted all of us, except Guskof, and sat down by me in the seat which the cashiered officer had just vacated. Pavel Dmitrievitch, who had always

[1] *Oui, mon cher, les jours se suivent, mais ne se ressemblent pas:* in French in the original.

been calm and leisurely, a genuine gambler, and a man of means, was now very different from what I had known him in the flowery days of his success; he seemed to be in haste to go somewhere, kept constantly glancing at every one, and although he had sworn off from playing, it was not five minutes before he proposed to Lieutenant O. to set up a small faro-bank.

Lieutenant O. refused, under the pretext of having to attend to his duties, but in reality because, as he knew how few possessions and little money Pavel Dmitrievitch had left, he did not feel himself justified in risking his three hundred rubles against a hundred or even less which the adjutant might stake.

"Well, Pavel Dmitrievitch," said the lieutenant, anxious to avoid a repetition of the invitation, "is it true, what they tell us, that we return to-morrow?"

"I don't know," replied Pavel Dmitrievitch. "Orders came, to be in readiness; but if it's true, then you'd better play a game. I would wager my Kabarda."

"No, to-day I've...."

"He's a gray. Don't count that once; but if you prefer, play for money. How is that?"....

"Yes, but.... I should be willing.... pray don't think that...." said Lieutenant O., answering the implication; "but as there may be a raid or some movement, I must go to bed early."

The adjutant stood up, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, started to go across the grounds. His face assumed its ordinary expression of coldness and pride, which I admired in him.

"Won't you have a glass of mulled wine?" I asked him.

"That might be acceptable," and he came back to me; but Guskof hastily snatched the glass from me, and handed it to the adjutant, striving at the same time not to look at him. But as he did not notice the tent-rope, Guskof stumbled over it, and fell on his hands, dropping the glass.

"What a bungler!" exclaimed the adjutant, still holding out his hand for the glass. Everybody burst out

laughing, not excepting Guskof, who was rubbing his hand over his bruised knee, which he had somehow struck as he fell. "That's the way the bear waited on the hermit," continued the adjutant. "It's the way he waits on me every day. He has pulled up all the tent-pins; he's always tripping up."

Guskof, not hearing him, apologized to us, and glanced toward me with a smile of almost noticeable melancholy as if saying that I alone could understand him. He was pitiable to see; but the adjutant, his protector, seemed, for some reason, to be severe on his messmate, and did not try to put him at his ease.

"Well, you're a graceful lad! Where did you think you were going?"

"Well, who can help tripping over these pins, Pavel Dmitrievitch?" said Guskof. "You tripped over them yourself the other day."

"I, batyushka, — I am not of the rank and file, and gracefulness is not expected of me."

"He can be a laggard," [1] said Captain S., keeping the ball rolling, "but low-rank men have to make their legs fly."

"Strange jests," said Guskof, almost in a whisper, and casting down his eyes.

The adjutant was evidently vexed with his messmate; he listened with inquisitive attention to every word he said.

"He'll have to be sent out into ambuscade again," said he, addressing S., and pointing to the cashiered officer.

"Well, there'll be some more tears," said S., laughing.

Guskof no longer looked at me, but acted as if he were going to take some tobacco from his pouch, though there had been none there for some time.

"Get ready for the ambuscade, old man," [2] said S., addressing him amid shouts of laughter. "To-day the scouts have brought the news, there'll be an attack on the camp to-night, so it's necessary to designate the trusty lads."

[1] Literally, drag the legs.

[2] *Batenka.*

An irresolute smile crossed Guskof's face as if he were preparing to make some reply, and several times he cast a supplicating look at S.

"Well, you know I have been, and I'm ready to go again if I am sent," he said hastily.

"Then you 'll be sent."

"Well, I'll go. Is n't that all right?"

"Yes, as at Arguna you deserted the ambuscade and threw away your gun," said the adjutant; and, turning from him, he began to tell us the orders for the next day.

As a matter of fact, we expected from the enemy a cannonade of the camp that night, and the next day some sort of diversion. While still chatting about various subjects of general interest, the adjutant, as if from a sudden and unexpected impulse, proposed to Lieutenant O. to have a little game. The lieutenant most unexpectedly consented; and, together with S. and the ensign, they went off to the adjutant's tent, where there was a folding green table with cards on it. The captain, the commander of our division, went to his tent to sleep; the other gentlemen also took their departure, and Guskof and I were left alone. My presentiment was right: it was really very uncomfortable for me to have a *tête-à-tête* with him; I arose involuntarily, and began to promenade up and down on the battery. Guskof walked in silence by my side, hastily and awkwardly wheeling around so as not to delay or incommode me.

"I do not annoy you?" he asked in a soft, mournful voice. As well as I could see by his face in the dim light, he seemed deeply thoughtful and melancholy.

"Not at all," I replied; but as he did not immediately begin to speak, and as I did not know what to say to him, we walked in silence a considerably long time.

The twilight had now absolutely changed into dark night; over the black profile of the mountains gleamed the bright evening heat-lightning; over our heads in the light-blue frosty sky twinkled the little stars; on all sides gleamed the ruddy flames of the smoking watch-fires; near us the white tents stood out in contrast to the frowning blackness of our earthworks. The light

from the nearest watch-fire, around which our servants, engaged in quiet conversation, were warming themselves, occasionally flashed on the brass of our heavy guns, and fell on the form of the sentry, who, wrapped in his cloak, paced with measured tread along the battery.

"You cannot imagine what a delight it is for me to talk with such a man as you are," said Guskof, although as yet he had not spoken a word to me. "Only one who had been in my position could appreciate it."

I did not know how to reply to him, and we again relapsed into silence, although, evidently, he wanted to talk and I to listen to him.

"Why were you .... why did you suffer this?" I inquired at last, not being able to invent any better way of starting a conversation.

"Why, did n't you hear about this wretched business from Metyenin?"

"Yes, a duel, I believe; I did not hear much about it," I replied. "You see, I have been for some time in the Caucasus."

"No, it was n't a duel, but it was a stupid and horrid story. I will tell you all about it, if you don't know. It happened the same year that I met you at my sister's; I was living then at Petersburg. I must tell you I had then what they call *une position dans le monde*,—a position good enough if it was not brilliant. *Mon père me donnait* 10,000 *par an.* In '49 I was promised a place in the embassy at Turin; my uncle on my mother's side had influence, and was always ready to do a great deal for me. That sort of thing is all past now. *J'étais reçu dans la meilleure société de Petersbourg;* I might have aspired to any girl in the city. I was well educated, as we all are who come from the school, but was not especially cultivated; to be sure, I read a good deal afterward, *mais j'avais surtout*, you know, *ce jargon du monde*, and, however it came about, I was looked on as one of the leading young men of Petersburg. What raised me more than all in common estimation, *c'est cette liaison avec Madame D.*, about which a great deal was said in Petersburg; but I was frightfully young

at that time, and did not prize these advantages very highly. I was simply young and stupid. What more did I need? Just then that Metyenin had some notoriety ...."

And Guskof went on in the same fashion to relate to me the history of his misfortunes, which I will omit, as it would not be at all interesting.

"Two months I remained under arrest," he continued, "absolutely alone; and what thoughts did I not have during that time? But you know, when it was all over, as if every tie had been broken with the past, then it became easier for me. *Mon père* — you have heard tell of him, of course, a man of iron will and strong convictions, — *il m'a désherité*, and has broken off all intercourse with me. According to his convictions he had to do as he did, and I don't blame him at all. *Il a été conséquent* — perfectly consistent. Consequently I have not taken a step to induce him to change his mind. My sister was abroad. Madame D. is the only one who wrote to me when I was released, and she sent me assistance; but you understand that I could not accept it, so that I had none of those little things which make one's position a little easier, you know, — books, linen, food, or anything. At this time I thought things over and over, and began to look at life with different eyes. For instance, this noise, this society gossip about me in Petersburg, did not interest me, did not flatter me; it all seemed to me ridiculous. I felt that I myself had been to blame; I was young and indiscreet; I had spoiled my career, and I only thought how I might get into the right track again. And I felt that I had strength and energy enough for it. After my arrest, as I told you, I was sent here to the Caucasus to the N. regiment.

"I thought," he went on to say, all the time becoming more and more animated, — "I thought that here in the Kavkas, *la vie de camp*, the simple, honest men with whom I should associate, and war and danger, would all admirably agree with my state of mind, so that I might begin a new life. They will see me under

fire.[1] I shall make myself liked; I shall be respected for my real self, — the cross — non-commissioned officer; they will relieve me of my fine; and I shall get up again, *et, vous savez, avec ce prestige du malheur!* But, *quel désenchantement!* You can't imagine how I have been deceived! .... You know what sort of men the officers of our regiment are."

He did not speak for some little time, waiting, as it appeared, for me to tell him how bad I knew the society of our officers here was; but I made him no reply. It went against my grain that he should expect me, because I knew French, forsooth, to take issue with the society of the officers, which, during my long residence in the Caucasus, I had had time enough to appreciate fully, and which I respected a thousandfold more than the society from which Mr. Guskof had sprung. I wanted to tell him so, but his position constrained me.

"In the N. regiment the society of the officers is a thousand times worse than it is here," he continued. "I hope that it is saying a good deal;[2] that is, you cannot imagine what it is. I am not speaking of the yunkers and the soldiers. That is horrible, it is so bad. At first they received me very kindly, that is absolutely the truth; but when they saw that I could not help despising them, you know, in these inconceivably small circumstances, they saw that I was a man absolutely different, standing far above them, they got angry with me, and began to put various little humiliations on me. You have n't an idea what I had to suffer.[3] Then this forced relationship with the yunkers, and especially with the small means that I had .... I lacked everything;[4] I had only what my sister used to send me. And here 's a proof for you! As much as it made me suffer, I, with my character, *avec ma fierté, j'ai écris à mon père*, I begged him to send me something. I understand how living four years of such a life may make a man like our cashiered

[1] *On me verra au feu.*
[2] *J'espère que c'est beaucoup dire.*
[3] *Ce que j'ai eu à souffrir vous ne vous faites pas une idée.*
[4] *Avec les petits moyens que j'avais, je manquais de tout.*

Dromof, who drinks with soldiers, and writes notes to all the officers asking them to lend him three rubles, and signing it, *tout à vous*, Dromof. One must have such a character as I have not to be mired in the least by such a horrible position."

For some time he walked in silence by my side.

"Have you a cigarette?"[1] he asked me.

"And so I stayed right where I was? Yes. I could not endure it physically, because I lived like a common soldier, and we were wretched, cold, and ill-fed.... but still the officers had some sort of consideration for me. I had still some prestige, which they regarded. I was n't sent out on guard, nor for drill. I could not have stood that. But morally my sufferings were frightful; and especially because I saw no escape from my position. I wrote my uncle, begged him to get me transferred to my present regiment, which, at least, sees some service; and I thought that here Pavel Dmitrievitch, *qui est le fils de l'intendant de mon père*, might be of some use to me. My uncle did this for me; I was transferred. After that regiment this one seemed to me a collection of chamberlains. Then Pavel Dmitrievitch was here; he knew who I was, and I was splendidly received. At my uncle's request.... a Guskof, *vous savez;* but I observed that with these men, without cultivation, and undeveloped,.... they can't appreciate a man, and show him marks of esteem, unless he has that aureole of wealth, of friends; and I noticed how, little by little, when they saw that I was poor, their behavior to me showed more and more indifference, until they have come almost to despise me. It is horrible, but it is absolutely the truth.

"Here I have been in action, I have fought, they have seen me under fire,"[2] he continued; "but when will it all end? I think, never. And my strength and energy have already begun to flag. Then I had imagined *la guerre, la vie de camp;* but it is n't at all what I expected: in a sheepskin jacket, dirty linen, soldier's boots, you go out in ambuscade, and the whole night

[1] *Avez-vous un papiros?* [2] *On m'a vu au feu.*

long lie in the ditch with some Antonof reduced to the ranks for drunkenness, and any minute, from behind the bush, may come a rifle-shot, and hit you or Antonof, — it's all the same. That is not bravery; it's horrible, *c'est affreux*, it's killing!"[1]

"Well, you may be promoted a non-commissioned officer for this campaign, and next year an ensign," said I.

"Yes, it may be; they promised me that, but in two years, and it's not up yet. What would those two years amount to, if I knew any one! You can imagine this life with Pavel Dmitrievitch; cards, low jokes, drinking all the time; if you wish to tell anything that is weighing on your mind, you are not understood, or you are laughed at; they talk with you, not for the sake of sharing a thought, but to get something funny out of you. Yes .... and so it has gone .... in a brutal, beastly way, and you are always conscious that you belong to the rank and file; they always make you feel that. Hence you can't realize what an enjoyment it is to talk *à cœur ouvert* to such a man as you are."

I had never imagined what kind of a man I was, and consequently I did not know what answer to make him.

"Will you have your supper now?" asked Nikita at this juncture, approaching me unseen in the darkness, and, as I could perceive, vexed at the presence of a guest. "Nothing but curd dumplings; there's none of the roast beef left."

"Has the captain had his supper yet?"

"He went to bed long ago," replied Nikita, gruffly. "According to my directions, I was to serve your supper here and your brandy."

He muttered something else discontentedly, and sauntered off to his tent. After grumbling a little more, he brought us, nevertheless, a bottle-case; he placed a candle on the bottle-case, and shielded it from the wind with a sheet of paper. He brought a saucepan, some mustard in a jar, a tin dipper with a handle, and a bottle of absinthe. After he had arranged all these things,

[1] *Ça tue.*

Nikita lingered around us for some moments, and looked on with great disapprobation as Gustof and I were drinking the liqueur. By the feeble light shed by the candle through the paper, amid the encircling darkness, could be seen the sealskin cover of the bottle-case, the supper arranged on it, Guskof's sheepskin jacket, his face, and his small red hands which he used in lifting the dumplings from the pan. Everything round us was black; and only by straining the sight could be seen the dark battery, the dark form of the sentry moving along the breastwork, on all sides the watch-fires, and on high the ruddy stars.

Guskof wore a melancholy, almost guilty smile, as if it were awkward for him to look into my face after his confession. He drank still another glass of the liqueur, and ate ravenously, emptying the saucepan.

"Yes; for you it must be a relief all the same," said I, for the sake of saying something, — "your acquaintance with the adjutant. He is a very good man, I have heard."

"Yes," replied the cashiered officer, "he is a kind man; but he can't help being what he is, with his education, and it is useless to expect it." A flush seemed suddenly to cross his face. "You remarked his coarse jest this evening about the ambuscade."

And Guskof, though I tried several times to interrupt him, began to justify himself before me, and to show that he had not run away from the ambuscade, and that he was not a coward as the adjutant and Captain S. tried to make him out.

"As I was telling you," he went on to say, wiping his hands on his sheepskin jacket, "such people can't show any delicacy toward a man, a common soldier, who has n't much money either. That 's beyond their strength. And here recently, since I have n't received anything at all from my sister for five months, I have noticed how they have changed toward me. This sheepskin jacket, which I bought of a soldier, and which has n't any warmth in it, because it 's all worn out," — and here he showed me where the wool was gone from the inside, — "it does n't arouse in him any sympathy or consideration

for my unhappiness, but scorn, which he does not take pains to hide. Whatever my necessities may be, as now when I have nothing to eat except soldiers' kasha-gruel, and nothing to wear," he continued, casting down his eyes, and pouring out for himself still another glass of the liqueur, "he does not even offer to lend me some money, though he knows perfectly well that I would give it back to him; but he waits till I am obliged to ask him for it. But you appreciate how it is for me to go to *him*. In your case I should say square and fair, *Vous êtes au dessus de cela, mon cher, je n'ai pas le sou*. And you know," said he, looking straight into my eyes with an expression of desperation, "I am going to tell you square and fair, I am in terrible straits: *pouvez-vous me prêter dix rubles argent?* My sister ought to send me some by the next mail, *et mon père* ...."

"Why, most willingly," said I, although, on the contrary, it was trying and unpleasant, especially because the evening before, having lost at cards, I had left only about five rubles in Nikita's care. "In a moment," said I, arising; "I will go and get it at the tent."

"No, by and by; *ne vous dérangez pas*."

Nevertheless, not heeding him, I hastened to the closed tent, where stood my bed, and where the captain was sleeping.

"Alekseï Ivanuitch, let me have ten rubles, please, for rations," said I to the captain, shaking him.

"What! have you been losing again? But this very evening you were not going to play any more," murmured the captain, still half asleep.

"No, I have not been playing; but I want the money; let me have it, please."

"Makatiuk!" shouted the captain to his servant,[1] "hand me my bag with the money."

"Hush, hush!" said I, hearing Guskof's measured steps near the tent.

"What? Why hush?"

"Because that cashiered fellow has asked to borrow it of me. He's right there."

[1] *Denshchik.*

"Well, if you knew him, you would n't let him have it," remarked the captain. "I have heard about him. He 's a dirty, low-lived fellow."

Nevertheless, the captain gave me the money, ordered his man to put away the bag, pulled the flap of the tent neatly to, and, again saying, "If you only knew him, you would n't let him have it," drew his head down under the coverlet. "Now you owe me thirty-two, remember," he shouted after me.

When I came out of the tent, Guskof was walking near the settees; and his slight figure, with his crooked legs, his shapeless cap, his long white hair, kept appearing and disappearing in the darkness, as he passed in and out of the candle-light. He pretended not to see me.

I handed him the money. He said, "*Merci*," and, crumpling the bank-bill, thrust it into his trousers-pocket.

"Now I suppose the game is in full swing at the adjutant's," was his very next remark.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"He 's a wonderful player, always bold, and never backs out. When he 's in luck, it 's fine; but when it does not go well with him, he can lose frightfully. He has given proof of that. During this expedition, if you reckon his valuables, he has lost more than fifteen hundred rubles. But, as he played discreetly before, that officer of yours seemed to have some doubts about his honor."

"Well, that 's because he .... Nikita, have n't we any of that red wine[1] left?" I asked, very much relieved by Guskof's readiness of speech. Nikita still kept muttering; but he brought us the chikhir, and again looked on angrily as Guskof drained his glass. The free and easy ways formerly characteristic of Guskof were still noticeable. I wished that he would go as soon as possible; it seemed as if his only reason for not going was because he did not wish to go immediately after receiving the money. I said nothing.

"How could you, who have means, and were under

[1] *Chikhir*.

no necessity, simply *de gaiété de cœur*, make up your mind to come and serve in the Caucasus? That's what I don't understand," said he to me.

I endeavored to explain this act of renunciation, which seemed so strange to him.

"I can imagine how disagreeable the society of these officers — men without any comprehension of culture — must be for you. You could not understand one another. You see, you might live ten years, and not see anything, and not hear about anything, except cards, wine, and gossip about rewards and campaigns."

It was unpleasant for me, that he wished me to put myself on a par with him in his position; and, with absolute honesty, I assured him that I was very fond of cards and wine, and gossip about campaigns, and that I did not care to have any better comrades than those with whom I was associated. But he would not believe me.

"Well, you may say so," he continued; "but the lack of women's society, — I mean, of course, *femmes comme il faut*, — is that not a terrible deprivation? I don't know what I would give now to go into a drawing-room, if only for a moment, and to have a look at a pretty woman, even though it were through a crack."

He said nothing for a little, and drank still another glass of the chikhir.

"Oh, my God, my God![1] If it only might be our fate to meet again, somewhere in Petersburg, to live and move among men, among ladies!"

He drank up the dregs of the wine still left in the bottle, and when he had finished it, he said, "*Akh! pardon*, maybe you wanted some more. I was awfully heedless. However, I suppose I must have taken too much, and my head is n't very strong.[2] There was a time when I lived on Morskaya Street, *au rez-de-chaussée*, and had marvelous apartments, furniture, you know, and I was able to arrange it all beautifully, not so very expensively though; my father, to be sure, gave me

[1] *Akh, Bozhe moï, Bozhe moï!*
[2] *Et je n'ai pas la tête forte.*

porcelains, flowers, and silver, — a wonderful lot. *Le matin je sortais*, visits, *à cinq heures régulièrement.* I used to go and dine with *her;* often she was alone. *Il faut avouer que c'était une femme ravissante!* You did n't know her at all, did you?"

"No."

"You see, there was such a high degree of womanliness in her, and such tenderness, and what love! Lord! I did not know how to appreciate my happiness then. We would return after the theater, and have a little supper together. It was never dull where she was, *toujours gaie toujours aimante.* Yes, and I never realized what rare happiness it was. *Et j'ai beaucoup à me reprocher* in regard to her. *Je l'ai fait souffrir et souvent.* I was outrageous. Oh! What a marvelous time that was! Do I bore you?"

"No, not at all."

"Then I will tell you about our evenings. I used to go .... that stairway, every flower-pot I knew, ... the door-handle, all was so lovely, so familiar; then the vestibule, her room. .... No, it will never, never come back to me again! Even now she writes to me; if you will let me, I will show you her letters. But I am not what I was; I am ruined; I am no longer worthy of her. .... Yes, I am ruined forever. *Je suis cassé.* There 's no energy in me, no pride, nothing .... nor even any rank.[1] .... Yes, I am ruined; and no one will ever guess what I have suffered. Every one is indifferent. I am a lost man. Never any chance for me to rise, because I have fallen morally .... into the mire .... I have fallen." ....

At this moment there was evident in his words a genuine, deep despair; .... he did not look at me, but sat motionless.

"Why are you in such despair?" I asked.

"Because I am abominable. This life has degraded me, all that was in me, all is crushed out. It is not through pride that I hold out, but through abjectness: there 's no *dignité dans le malheur.* I am humiliated every moment. I endure it all; it is my own fault that

[1] *Blagorodstva*, noble birth, nobility.

I fell into this abasement. This mire *a éteint sur moi*, — it has soiled me. I myself have become coarse; I have forgotten what I used to know; I can't speak French any more; I am conscious that I am base and low. I cannot tear myself away from these surroundings, indeed I cannot. I might have been a hero; give me a regiment, gold epaulets, a trumpeter, but to march in the ranks with some wild Anton Bondarenko or the like, and feel that between me and him there was no difference at all — that he might be killed or I might be killed — all the same, that thought is maddening. You understand how horrible it is to think that some ragamuffin may kill me, a man who has thoughts and feelings, and that it would make no difference if alongside of me some Antonof were killed, — a creature not different from an animal — and that it might easily happen that I and not this Antonof should be killed; death is always *une fatalité* for every lofty and good man. I know that they call me a coward; grant that I am a coward, I certainly am a coward, and can't be anything else. Not only am I a coward, but I am in my way a low and despicable man. Here I have just been borrowing money of you, and you have the right to despise me. No, take back your money." And he held out to me the crumpled bank-bill. "I want you to have a good opinion of me." He covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears. I really did not know what to say or do.

"Calm yourself," I said to him. "You are too sensitive; don't take everything so to heart; don't indulge in self-analysis, look at things more simply. You yourself say that you have character. Keep up good heart, you won't have long to wait."

I said this to him, but not very consistently, because I was much stirred both by a feeling of sympathy and a feeling of repentance, because I had allowed myself mentally to criticize a man truly and deeply unhappy.

"Yes," he began, "if I had heard even once, at the time when I was in that hell, one single word of sym-

pathy, of advice, of friendship — one humane word such as you have just spoken, perhaps I might have calmly endured all; perhaps I might have struggled, and been a soldier. But now this is horrible. .... When I think soberly, I long for death. Why should I love my despicable life and my own self, now that I am ruined for all that is worth while in the world? And at the least danger, I suddenly, in spite of myself, begin to pray for my miserable life, and to watch over it as if it were precious, and I cannot, *je ne puis pas*, control myself. — That is, I can," he continued again after a minute's silence, "but it is too hard work for me, a monstrous work, when I am alone. With others, under special circumstances, when you are going into action, I am brave, *j'ai fait mes preuves*, because I am vain and proud; that is my weakness, and in presence of others. .... Do you know, let me spend the night with you; with us, they will play all night long; it makes no difference, anywhere, on the ground."

While Nikita was making the bed, we got up, and once more began to walk up and down in the darkness on the battery. Certainly Guskof's head must have been very weak, because two glasses of liqueur and two of wine made him dizzy. As we got up and moved away from the candles, I noticed that he again thrust the ten-ruble bill into his pocket, trying to do so without my seeing it. During all the foregoing conversation, he had held it in his hand. He continued to reiterate how he felt that he might regain his old station if he had a man such as I was to take some interest in him.

We were just going into the tent to go to bed when suddenly a cannon-ball whistled over us, and buried itself in the ground not far from us. So strange it was, — that peacefully sleeping camp, our conversation, and suddenly the hostile cannon-ball which flew from God knows where, into the midst of our tents, — so strange that it was some time before I could realize what it was. Our sentinel, Andreyef, walking up and down on the battery, moved toward me.

"Ha! he's crept up to us. It was the fire here that he aimed at," said he.

"We must rouse the captain," said I, and gazed at Guskof.

He crouched cowering close to the ground, and stammered, trying to say something, "Th-that's th-the enemy's .... f-f-fire .... th-that's .... hidi ...."

Further he could not say a word, and I did not see how and where he disappeared so instantaneously.

In the captain's tent a candle gleamed; his cough, which always troubled him when he was awake, was heard; and he himself soon appeared, asking for a linstock to light his little pipe.

"What does this mean, old man?"[1] he asked, with a smile. "Are n't they willing to give me a little sleep to-night? First it's you with your cashiered friend, and then it's Shamyl. What shall we do, answer him or not? There was nothing about this in the instructions, was there?"

"Nothing at all. There he goes again," said I. "Two of them!"

Indeed, in the darkness, directly in front of us, flashed two fires, like two eyes; and quickly over our heads flew a cannon-ball and an empty shell which must have been one of ours returned. It came with a loud and penetrating hum. From the neighboring tents the soldiers hastened. We could hear them hawking and talking and stretching themselves.

"Hist! the fuse sings like a nightingale," remarked the artillerist.

"Send for Nikita," said the captain, with his habitually benevolent smile. "Nikita, don't hide yourself, but listen to the mountain nightingales."

"Well, your honor,"[2] said Nikita, who was standing near the captain, "I have seen them — these nightingales. I am not afraid of 'em; but there was that stranger who was here, drinking up your red wine,

[1] *Batyushka.*

[2] *Vashe vuisokoblagorodie.* German, *hochwohlgeborener*, high-well-born; regulation title of officers from major to general.

when he heard how lively that shot dashed by our tents, and the shell rolled by, he cowered down like some wild beast."

"Well, we must send to the commander of the artillery," said the captain to me, in a serious tone of authority, "and ask whether we shall reply to the fire or not. It will probably be nothing at all, but still it may. Have the goodness to go and ask him. Have a horse saddled. Do it as quickly as possible, even if you take my Polkan."

In five minutes they brought me a horse, and I galloped off to the commander of the artillery. "Look you, return on foot," whispered the punctilious captain, "else they won't let you through the lines."

It was half a verst to the artillery commander's. All along the road the tents were pitched. As soon as I rode away from our fire, it became so black that I could not see even the horse's ears, but only the watch-fires, now seeming very near, now very far off, as they flashed into my eyes. After I had ridden some distance, trusting to the intelligence of the horse, which I allowed free rein, I began to distinguish the white four-cornered tents and then the black ruts in the road. After a half-hour, having asked my way three times, and twice stumbled over the tent-stakes, causing each time a volley of curses from the tents, and twice been detained by the sentinels, I reached the artillery commander's.

While I was on the way, I had heard two more cannon-shot in the direction of our camp; but the projectiles did not reach to the place where the headquarters were. The artillery commander ordered not to reply to the firing, the more as the enemy did not stick to the same place; and I went back, leading the horse by the bridle, making my way on foot between the infantry tents. More than once I delayed my steps, as I went by some soldier's tent where a light was shining, and some merry-andrew was telling a story; or I listened to some educated soldier reading from some book to the whole division, which had poured into the tent, or hung around it, occasionally interrupting the reading with

various remarks; or I simply listened to the talk about the expedition, about the fatherland, or about their chiefs.

As I came around one of the tents of the third battalion, I heard Guskof's loud voice; he was speaking hilariously and rapidly. Young voices replied no less hilariously to him, not those of soldiers, but gay gentlemen. It was evidently the tent of some yunker or sergeant-major. I stopped short.

"I've known him a long time," Guskof was saying. "When I lived in Petersburg, he used to come to my house often; and I went to his. He moved in the best society."

"Whom are you talking about?" asked a drunken voice.

"About the prince," said Guskof. "We are relatives, you see, but more than all, we are old friends. It's a mighty good thing, you know, gentlemen, to have such an acquaintance. You see, he's fearfully rich. To him a hundred silver rubles is a mere bagatelle. Here, I just got a little money out of him, enough to last me till my sister sends."

"Send for some more wine."

"In a moment. — Savelyitch, my dear," [1] said Guskof, coming to the door of the tent, "here's ten rubles for you; go to the sutler, get two bottles of Kakhetinski. Anything else, gentlemen? What do you say?" and Guskof, with unsteady gait, with disheveled hair, without his cap, came out of the tent. Throwing open his jacket, and thrusting his hands into the pockets of his gray trousers, he stood at the door of the tent. Though he was in the light, and I in darkness, I trembled with fear lest he should see me, and I went on, trying to make no noise.

"Who goes there?" shouted Guskof after me in a thoroughly drunken voice. Apparently, the cold took hold of him. "Who the devil is going off with that horse?"

I made no answer, and silently went on my way.

[1] *Galubchik*, little pigeon.

LOST ON THE STEPPE;

OR,

THE SNOWSTORM

A TALE

CHAPTER I

AT seven o'clock in the evening, having taken my tea, I started from a station, the name of which I have quite forgotten, though I remember that it was somewhere in the region of the Don Cossacks, not far from Novocherkask. It was already dark when I took my seat in the sledge next to Alyoshka, and wrapped myself in my fur coat and the robes. Back of the station-house it seemed warm and calm. Though it was not snowing, not a single star was to be seen overhead, and the sky seemed remarkably low and black, in contrast with the clear snowy expanse stretching out before us.

We had scarcely passed by the black forms of the windmills, one of which was awkwardly waving its huge vans, and had left the station behind us, when I perceived that the road was growing rougher and more drifted; the wind began to blow more fiercely on the left, it tossed the horses' manes and tails to one side, and it kept lifting and carrying away the snow stirred up by the runners and hoofs. The little bell rang with a muffled sound; a draught of cold air forced its way through some opening in my sleeves, to my very back; and the inspector's advice came into my head, that I had better stay where I was lest I should wander all night, and freeze to death on the road.

"Won't you get us lost?" said I to the *yamshchik*, or driver, but, as I got no answer, I put the question more distinctly: "Say, shall we reach the station, driver? We shan't lose our way?"

"God knows," was his reply; but he did not turn his head. "You see what kind of going we have. No road to be seen. Lord save us!"[1]

"Be good enough to tell me, do you hope to reach the station, or not?" I insisted. "Shall we get there?"

"Must get there," said the driver; and he muttered something else, which I could not hear on account of the wind.

I did not wish to turn about, but the idea of wandering all night in the cold and snow over the perfectly shelterless steppe, which made up this part of the Don Cossack land, was very disagreeable. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that I could not, by reason of the darkness, see him very well, my driver, somehow, did not please me, nor inspire any confidence. He sat exactly in the middle, with his legs in, and not on one side; his stature was too great; his voice expressed indolence; his cap, not like those usually worn by yamshchiks, was large and loose on all sides. Besides, he did not manage his horses in the proper way, but held the reins in both hands, just like the lackey who sat on the box behind the coachman; and, chiefly, I did not believe in him, because he had his ears wrapped up in a handkerchief. In a word, he did not please me; and it seemed as if that crooked, sinister back looming before me boded nothing good.

"In my opinion, it would be better to turn about," said Alyoshka to me: "fine thing it would be to be lost!"

"Lord save us! see how the snow blows! No road in sight. It blinds one's eyes..... Gospodi-batyushka!" repeated the driver.

We had not been a quarter of an hour on our way when the driver stopped the horses, handed the reins to Alyoshka, awkwardly liberated his legs from the seat,

[1] *Gospodi-batyushka!* Literally, Lord-little-father.

and went to search for the road, crunching over the snow in his great boots.

"What is it? Where are you going? Are we lost?" I asked, but the driver made no reply; turning his face away from the wind, which cut his eyes, he marched off from the sledge.

"Well, how is it?" I repeated, when he returned.

"Nothing at all," said he to me impatiently and with vexation, as if I were to blame for his missing the road; and, again slowly wrapping up his big legs in the robe, he gathered the reins in his frozen mittens.

"What shall we do?" I asked, as we started off again.

"What shall we do? We shall go where God takes us."

And we drove along in the same slow trot over what was evidently an untrodden waste, sometimes sinking in deep, mealy snow, sometimes gliding over crisp, smooth crust.

Although it was cold, the snow melted very quickly on my collar. The low-flying snow-clouds increased, and occasionally dry snowflakes began to fall.

It was clear that we were going out of our way, because, after keeping on for a quarter of an hour more, we saw no sign of a verst-post.

"Well, what do you think about it now?" I asked of the driver once more. "Shall we get to the station?"

"Which one? We should go back if we let the horses have their way; they will take us. But, as for the next one, that's a problem. .... Only we might perish."

"Well, then, let us go back," said I. "And indeed .... "

"How is it? Shall we turn back?" repeated the driver.

"Yes, yes; turn back."

The driver shook the reins. The horses started off more rapidly; and, though I did not notice that we had turned around, the wind changed, and soon through the snow appeared the windmills. The driver's good spirits returned, and he began to be communicative.

"Lately," said he, "in just such a snowstorm some

people coming from that same station lost their way. Yes; they spent the night in the hayricks, and barely managed to get here in the morning. Thanks to the hayricks, they were rescued. If it had not been for them, they would have frozen to death, it was so cold. And one froze his legs, and died three weeks afterward in consequence."

"But now, you see, it's not cold; and it's growing less windy," I said. "Could n't we go on?"

"It's warm enough, but it's snowing. Now, going back, it seems easier. But it's snowing hard. Might go on, if you were a cou*r*ier or something; but this is on your own account. What kind of a joke would that be if a passenger froze to death? How, then, could I be answerable to your grace?"

CHAPTER II

At this moment we heard behind us the bells of several troïkas which were rapidly overtaking us.

"A cou*r*ier's bell," said my driver. "There's one such for every station."

And, in fact, the bell of the courier's troïka, the sound of which now came clearly to me on the wind, was peculiarly beautiful, — clear, sonorous, deep, and jangling a little. As I then knew, this was a huntsman's team; three bells, — one large one in the center, with the *crimson* tone, as it is called, and two small ones tuned in thirds. The sound of this triad and the tinkling fifth, ringing through the air, was extraordinarily effective and strangely pleasant in this dark desert steppe.

"The posht is coming," said my driver, when the foremost of the three troïkas drew up in line with ours.

"Say, how is the road? is it possible to go on?" he cried to the last of the drivers. But the man only shouted to his horses, and made no reply.

The sound of the bells quickly died away on the wind, almost as soon as the post-team passed us.

Of course my driver felt ashamed.

"Well, let us try it again, barin," he said to me. "People have made their way through, now their tracks will be fresh."

I agreed; and once more we faced the wind, and began to crawl along on the deep snow. I kept my eyes on one side on the road, so that we should not get off the track that had been made by the other sledges. For two versts the tracks were plainly visible, then there began to be only a slight irregularity where the runners had gone; and soon I really could no longer distinguish whether it was the track, or merely a layer of drifted snow.

My eyes grew weary of gazing at the monotonous stretch of snow under the runners, and I began to look ahead. The third verst-post we had already seen, but the fourth we could not find at all. As before, we went in the teeth of the wind, and with the wind, and to the right and to the left; and finally we reached such a state that the driver declared that we must have turned off to the right. I declared that we must have turned off to the left, and Alyoshka was sure that we were going back all the time.

Again we stopped a number of times, the driver uncoiled his long legs, and crawled along trying to find the road. But all in vain. I also got out once to see whether it were the road or something else that attracted my attention. But I had scarcely taken six steps with difficulty against the wind, and convinced myself that we were surrounded by the same monotonous white heaps of snow, and that the road existed only in my imagination, when I lost sight of the sledge. I shouted, "Yamshchik! Alyoshka!" but, — I felt how the wind tore my voice right out of my mouth, and carried it in a twinkling far from me.

I went in the direction where the sledge had been — the sledge was not there. I went to the right — not there either. I am ashamed to recollect in what a loud, penetrating, and even rather despairing voice I shouted once more, "Yamshchik!" and there he was two steps

away. His black figure, with his whip, and his huge cap hanging down on one side, suddenly loomed up before me. He led me to the sledge.

"Thank the Lord, it's still warm!" said he. "To perish with the cold — awful! Lord save us!"[1]

"Let the horses find their own way, let us turn back," said I, as I took my place in the sledge. "Won't they take us back? hey, driver?"

"They ought to."

He gave the horses the reins, cracked his whip three times over the saddle of the shaft-horse, and again we started off at haphazard. We went for half an hour. Suddenly before us again I heard the easily recognized bell of the hunting establishment, and the other two. But now they were coming toward us. It was the same three troïkas, which had already deposited the mail, and, with a change of horses attached behind, were returning to the station. The courier's troïka of powerful horses with the hunting-bell quickly dashed ahead. A single driver sat on the driver's seat, and was shouting vigorously. Behind him, in the middle one of the empty sledges, were two other drivers; and their loud and hilarious talk could be heard. One of them was smoking a pipe; and the spark, brightened by the wind, lighted up a part of his face.

As I looked at them, I felt ashamed that I was afraid to go on; and my driver doubtless had the same feeling, because we both said with one voice: —

"Let us follow them."

CHAPTER III

My driver, without waiting for the last troïka to pass, began awkwardly to turn around; and the thills hit the horses attached behind. One of the troïka teams shied, tore away the reins, and galloped off.

"Hey there, you squint-eyed devil! Don't you see where you are turning? Running people down, you

[1] *Gospodi-batyushka.*

devil!" in a hoarse, discordant voice scolded one of the drivers, a short, little old man, as I judged by his voice and temperament. He sprang hastily out of the hindmost sledge, where he had been sitting, and started to run after the horses, still continuing roughly and violently to vilify my yamshchik.

But the horses did not come back. The driver ran after them, and in one instant both horses and driver were lost from sight in the white mist of the storm.

"Vasi-i-i-li! bring the bay horse here, else I can't ke-e-etch him," rang his voice in the distance.

One of the drivers, a very tall muzhik, got out of his sledge, silently unhitched his troïka, mounted one of the horses by the breeching, and, crunching over the snow in a clumsy gallop, disappeared in the same direction.

Our own troïka, with the two others, followed on over the steppe, behind the courier's, which dashed ahead in full trot, jingling its bell, and sticking closely to the road.

"How is it? He'll get 'em," said my driver, referring to the one who had gone to catch the horses. "If that mare did n't find the horses she would n't be good for much, you know: she 'd wander off, so that .... she 'd get lost."

From the moment that my driver had the company of other teams he became more hilarious and talkative; and, as I had no desire to sleep, I did not fail, as a matter of course, to make the most of it. I took pains to ask him about his home and his family, and soon learned that he was from the same government that I was, — from Tula, — a peasant, belonging to a noble family from the village of Kirpitchnoye; that they had very little land, and the grain had entirely ceased to grow, since the time of the cholera; that he and one of his brothers had stayed at home, and a third had gone as a soldier; that up to Christmas they had lacked bread, and had been obliged to work out; that his younger brother had looked out for things at home because he was married, but that he himself was a widower; that his villagers every year came here to exercise the trade

of *yamshchik*, or driver; that, though he did not go out as a regular driver, yet he was in the post-service, so as to help his brother; that he earned there, thanks to God, a hundred and twenty paper rubles a year, of which he sent a hundred to his family; and that it would be good living, "but the coul*i*ers were very wild beasts, and the people here were all impudent."

"Now, what was that driver scolding about? Lord save us![1] did I mean to lose his horses for him? Did I treat him in a mean way? And why did he go galloping off after 'em? They'd have come in of their own accord. Anyway, 'twould be better for the horses to freeze to death than for him to get lost," said the pious muzhik.

"What is that black thing I see coming?" I asked, pointing to some dark object in front of us.

"That's a baggage-train. Splendid wheeling!" he went on to say, as we came up with the huge mat-covered vans on wheels, following one after the other. "See, not a soul to be seen.... all asleep. The wise horse knows: you won't drive her from the road, never..... We've driven in that same way.... so we know," he added.

It was indeed strange to see the huge vans covered with snow from the matted tops to the wheels, moving along, absolutely alone. Only the front corner of the snow-covered mat would be lifted by two fingers; and, for a moment, a cap would peer out as our bells jingled past the train. A great piebald horse, stretching out his neck, and straining his back, walked with measured pace over the drifted road, monotonously shaking his shaggy head under the whitened bell-bow,[2] and pricking up one snow-covered ear as we went by.

After we had gone still another half-hour, the driver once more turned to me:—

"Well, what do you think, barin? Are we getting along well?"

[1] *Gospodi-batyushka.*

[2] *Duga*, the distinctive part of the Russian harness, rising high above the horse, carrying the bells.

"I don't know," I said.

"Before, the wind blew in our faces, but now we go right along with it. No, we shan't get there; we are off the track," he said in conclusion, with perfect equanimity.

It was evident that, though he was very timid, yet, as "death in company with others is pleasant," he was perfectly content to die now that there were a number of us, and he was not obliged to take the lead, and be responsible. He coolly made observations on the mistake of the head driver, as if it were not of the least consequence to himself. In fact, I had noticed that sometimes the front troïka appeared on my right, and again on my left. It seemed to me, too, that we were making a circle in very small space. However, it might be that it was an ocular deception, just as sometimes it seemed as if the front troïka were climbing up a mountain or were going along a slope or down a mountain, even when the steppe was everywhere perfectly level.

After we had gone on a little while longer, I saw, as it seemed to me, at a distance, on the very horizon, a long, black, moving line; but it quickly became plain to me that it was the same baggage-train which we had passed. In exactly the same way, the snow covered the creaking wheels, several of which did not turn; in exactly the same way, the men were sleeping under the matted tops; and likewise the piebald leader, swelling out his nostrils, snuffed out the road, and pricked back his ears.

"See, we've gone round in a circle; we've gone round in a circle! Here's the same baggage-train again!" exclaimed my driver, in a discontented tone. "The coulier's horses are good ones, so it makes no difference to him, even if he does go on a wild-goose chase. But ours will get tired out if we have to spend the whole night here."

He had an attack of coughing.

"Should we go back, barin, owing to the mistake?"

"No! Why? We shall come out somewhere."

"Come out where? We shall have to spend the

night on the steppe. How it is snowing!.... Lord save us!" [1]

Although it was clear to me that the head driver, who had lost both the road and the direction, was not hunting for the road, but singing at the top of his voice, still drove on at a full trot, I did not like to part company from them.

"Follow them," said I.

The yamshchik drove on, but followed them even less willingly than before, and no longer had anything to say to me.

CHAPTER IV

The storm became more and more violent, and the snow fell dry and fine; it seemed as if it were beginning to grow colder. My nose and cheeks felt as if they were freezing, more frequently the draught of cold air insinuated itself under my shuba, and it became necessary to bundle up warmer. Sometimes the sledge bumped on the bare, icy crust from which the snow had been blown away. As I had already gone six hundred versts without sleeping under roof, and though I felt great interest in the outcome of our wanderings, my eyes closed in spite of me, and I drowsed.

Once, when I opened my eyes, I was struck, as it seemed to me at the first moment, by a bright light, gleaming over the white plain: the horizon widened considerably, the lowering black sky suddenly lifted up on all sides, the white slanting lines of the falling snow became visible, the shapes of the head troïkas stood out clearly; and, when I looked up, it seemed to me at the first moment that the clouds had scattered, and that only the falling snow veiled the stars.

Just as I awoke from my drowse, the moon had come out, and was casting her cold bright beams through the tenuous clouds and the falling snow. I saw clearly my sledge, horses, driver, and the three troïkas, plowing

[1] *Gospodi-batyushka.*

on in front: the first was the courier's sledge, in which still sat on the box the one yamshchik, driving at a hard trot; the second, in which rode the two drivers, who had dropped the reins and made a shelter out of a camel's-hair coat[1] behind which they still smoked their pipes, as could be seen by the sparks glowing in their direction; and the third, in which no one was visible, for the yamshchik was comfortably sleeping in the middle.

The leading driver, however, while I was awake, had several times brought his horses to a half halt and attempted to find the road. Then while we stopped the howling of the wind became more audible, and more noticeable the enormous heaps of snow afloat in the air. By the aid of the moonlight which made its way through the storm, I could see the driver's short figure, whip in hand, examining the snow before him, moving back and forth in the misty light, again coming back to the sledge, and springing sidewise on the seat; and then again I heard above the monotonous whistling of the wind, the comfortable, clear jingling and melody of the bells.

When the head driver crept out to find the marks of the road or the hayricks, each time was heard the lively, self-confident voice of one of the yamshchiks in the second sledge, shouting:—

"Hey, Ignashka! you turned off too much to the left. Strike off to the right into the storm." Or, "Why are you going round in a circle? Keep straight ahead as the snow flies. Follow the snow, then you 'll hit it." Or, "Take the right, take the right, old man.[2] There 's something black, it must be a post." Or, "What are you getting lost for? why are you getting lost? Unhitch the piebald horse, and let him find the road for you. He 'll do it every time. That would be the best way."

The man who was so free with his advice not only did not offer to unhitch his off horse, or go himself across the snow to hunt for the road, but did not even

[1] *Armyak.*

[2] *Bratets tui moĭ;* literally, "Thou brother mine."

put his nose outside of his shelter-coat; and when Ignashka, the leader, in reply to one of his proffers of advice, shouted to him to come and take the forward place, since he knew the road so well, the mentor replied that when he came to drive a courier's sledge, then he would take the lead, and never once miss the road. "But our horses would n't go straight through a snow-drift," he shouted; "they are n't the right kind."

"Then don't you worry," replied Ignashka, gayly whistling to his horses.

The yamshchik who sat in the same sledge with the mentor said nothing at all to Ignashka, and paid no attention to the difficulty, though he was not yet asleep, as I concluded by his pipe which still glowed, and because, when we halted, I heard his measured voice in uninterrupted flow. He was telling a story. Once only, when Ignashka for the sixth or seventh time came to a stop, it seemed to vex him because his comfort in traveling was disturbed, and he shouted: —

"Stopping again? He 's missing the road on purpose. This is a regular blizzard! The surveyor himself could not find the road! he would let the horses find it. We shall freeze to death here; .... just let him go on regardless!"

"What! Don't you know a poshtallion froze to death last winter?" shouted my driver.

All this time the driver of the third troïka had not been heard from. But once, while we were stopping, the advice-giver shouted, "Filipp! ha! Filipp!" and, not getting any response, remarked: —

"Can he have frozen to death? Ignashka, you go and look."

Ignashka, who was responsible for all, went to his sledge, and began to shake the sleeper.

"See how a teaspoonful of brandy makes him tipsy! If you are frozen to death, tell us so!" said he, shaking him.

The sleeper grunted a little, and then began to scold.

"He 's alive, fellows!" said Ignashka, and again started ahead, and once more we drove on; and with

such rapidity that the little brown off horse, in my three-span, which was constantly whipping his tail, did not once intermit his awkward gallop.

CHAPTER V

It was already about midnight, I judge, when the little old man and Vasili, who had gone in search of the runaway horses, rejoined us. They had caught the horses, and had now overtaken us; but how in the world they had accomplished this in the thick, blinding snowstorm, in the midst of the bare steppe, has always remained a mystery to me. The little old man, with his elbows and legs flying, came trotting up on the shaft-horse (the two other horses were fastened to the collars; in such a snowstorm, it was impossible to let them go). When they had caught up with me, he again began to scold at my driver.

"You see, you cross-eyed devil! you...."

"Oh, Uncle Mitritch,"[1] cried the talkative fellow in the second sledge, "are you alive? Come in with us."

The old man did not answer him, but continued to scold. When he had satisfied himself, he rode up to the second sledge.

"Get 'em all?" was asked him.

"Why, of course we did."

And his small figure shook up and down on the horse's back as he went off at full trot, then sprang down into the snow, and without stopping caught up with the sledge, and sat in it with his legs hanging over the side. The tall Vasili, just as before, took his place in perfect silence in the front sledge with Ignashka; and then the two began to look for the road together.

"What a spitfire! Lord save us!" muttered my driver.

For a long time after this we drove on without

[1] Condensed form for Dmitriyevitch, "son of Dmitri." The peasants often call each other by the patronymic.

stopping, over the white waste, in the cold, pellucid, and wavering light of the snowstorm.

When I opened my eyes, there before me rose the same clumsy, snow-covered cap and back; the same low *duga*, or bell-bow, under which, between the leathern reins tightly stretched, there moved always at the same distance the head of the shaft-horse with the black mane blown to one side by the wind. And I could see, above his back, the brown off horse on the right, with his short braided tail, and the whiffletree sometimes knocking against the dasher of the sleigh. If I looked below, then I saw the scurrying snow stirred up by the runners, and constantly tossed and borne by the wind to one side. In front of me, always at the same distance, glided the other troïkas. To left and right, all was white and bewildering. Vainly the eye sought for any new object: no verst-post, or hayrick, or fence was to be seen, nothing at all. Everywhere, all was white, white and fluctuating: now the horizon seemed to be indistinguishably distant, then it would come down within two steps on every side; now suddenly a high white wall would grow up on the right, and accompany the course of the sledges, then it would suddenly vanish, and grow up in front, only to glide on in advance, farther and farther away, and disappear again.

When I looked up it would seem light. At the first moment, I imagined that through the haze I saw the stars; but the stars, as I gazed, seemed to flee into deeper and deeper depths, and I could see only the snow falling into my face and eyes, and the collar of my fur shuba; the sky had everywhere one tone of light, one tone of white, — colorless, monotonous, and constantly shifting.

The wind seemed to vary: at one moment it would blow into my face, and fling the snow into my eyes; the next it would go to one side, and peevishly toss the collar of my shuba over my head, and insultingly slap me in the face with it; then find some crevice behind, and play a tune on it.

I heard the soft, incessant crunching of the hoofs

and the runners on the snow, and the muffled tinkling of the bells, as we sped over the deep snow. Only occasionally when we drove against the wind, and glided over the bare frozen crust, I could clearly distinguish Ignat's energetic whistling, and the full chords of the chime, with the resounding jarring fifth; and these sounds would break suddenly and comfortingly on the melancholy character of the desert; and then again ring monotonously, with unendurable fidelity of execution, the whole of that motive which involuntarily coincided with my thoughts.

One of my feet began to feel cold, and when I turned round so as to protect it better, the snow that covered my collar and my cap sifted down my neck, and made me shiver; but still I was, for the most, comfortable in my warm shuba, and drowsiness overcame me.

CHAPTER VI

Things remembered and things conceived mixed and mingled with wonderful quickness in my imagination.

"The advice-giver who is always shouting from the second sledge, what kind of a muzhik must he be? Probably red-haired, thick-set, with short legs, a man somewhat like Feodor Filippuitch, our old butler," is what I say to myself.

And here I see the staircase of our great house, and five of the house-servants who, with towels, with heavy steps, carry the pianoforte from the wing; I see Feodor Filippuitch with the sleeves of his nankeen coat tucked up, carrying one of the pedals, and going in advance, unbolting the door, taking hold of the door-knob here, there pushing a little, now crawling under the legs; he is here, there, and everywhere, crying with an anxious voice continually: —

"Look out, take more weight, you there in front! Be careful, you there at the tail-end! Up — up — up — don't hit the door. There, there!"

"Excuse me, Feodor Filippuitch! There ain't enough

of us," says the gardener, timidly, crushed up against the balustrade, and all red with exertion, lifting one end of the grand with all his remaining strength. But Feodor Filippuitch does not hold his peace.

"And what does it mean?" I ask myself. "Does he think that he is of any use, that he is indispensable for the work in hand? or is he simply glad that God has given him this self-confident persuasive eloquence, and takes enjoyment in squandering it? It must be so."

And I somehow see the pond, the weary servants, who, up to their knees in the water, drag the heavy net; and again Feodor Filippuitch with a watering-pot, shouting to everybody, walking up and down on the bank, and only now and then venturing to the brink, taking with his hand the golden carp, and letting the dirty water run out from his watering-pot, so as to fill it up with fresh.

But here it is midday, in the month of July. Across the newly mown turf of the lawn, under the burning perpendicular rays of the sun, I seem to be going somewhere. I am still very young; I am full of yearnings, full of desires. I go to the pond, to my own favorite spot between the wild rose bush and the birch-tree alley; and I lie down and nap. Keen is the sensation that I have, as I lie down, and look across the red thorny stems of the rose bush on the dark ground with its dry grass and on the gleaming bright blue mirror of the pond. It is a sensation of a naïve self-contentment and melancholy. All around me is so lovely, and this loveliness has such a powerful effect on me, that it seems to me as if I myself were good; and the one thing that vexes me is that no one is there to admire me.

It is hot. I try to go to sleep so as to console myself; but the flies, the unendurable flies, even here, give me no peace. They begin to swarm around me, and obstinately, insolently, as it were, heavy as cherry-stones, jump from my forehead to my hands. A bee buzzes near me in the sunbeams. Yellow-winged butterflies fly languidly from flower to flower.

I gaze up. It pains my eyes. The sun shines too bright through the light foliage of the bushy birch tree, gracefully waving its branches high above my head, and it seems hotter than ever. I cover my face with my handkerchief. It becomes stifling; and the flies stick to my hands, on which the perspiration stands. In the rose bush the sparrows twitter under the thick leaves. One hops to the ground almost within my reach, makes two or three feints to peck energetically at the ground, and, after making the little twigs crackle, chirping gayly it flies away from the bush; another also hops to the ground, wags his little tail, looks around, and, like an arrow, flies off twittering after the first.

At the pond are heard the blows of the pounder on the wet linen; and the noise reëchoes, and is carried far away down along the shore. I hear laughter and talking, and the splashing of bathers. The breath of the wind sweeps the tops of the birches far above my head, and bends them down again. I hear it moving the grass, and now the leaves of the rose bush toss and rustle on their stems. And now, lifting the corner of my handkerchief, it tickles my sweaty face, and pours in on me in a cooling draught. Through the opening where the handkerchief is lifted a fly finds his way, and timidly buzzes around my moist mouth. A dry twig begins to make itself felt under my back. No; it is unendurable to lie so; I must go and bathe.

But now, around the clump of bushes, I hear the sound of footsteps, and the frightened voice of a woman: —

"Mercy on me![1] what 's to be done? And no man anywhere!"

"What 's the matter?" I ask, running out into the sun, as a serving-woman, screaming, hurries past me. She merely glances at me, wrings her hands, and hurries along faster. And here comes also the seventy-year-old Matriona, holding her handkerchief to her head, with her hair all in disorder, and hopping along

[1] *Akh, batyushki!*

with her lame leg in a woolen stocking, hurrying to the pond. Two girls come running, hand in hand; and a ten-year-old boy in his father's jacket runs behind, clinging to the linen petticoat of one of them.

"What has happened?" I ask of them.

"A muzhik drowned!"

"Where?"

"In the pond."

"Who is he? one of ours?"

"No, a tramp."

The coachman Ivan, sliding in his big boots over the mown grass, and the fat overseer[1] Yakof, all out of breath, come hurrying to the pond; and I follow after them.

I recall the feeling which said to me, "Now jump in, and pull the muzhik out, and save him; and all will admire you," for that was exactly what I wanted.

"Where is he? where?" I asked of the throng of domestics gathered on the shore.

"Over there in the deepest part, on the other shore, almost at the bath-house," says the laundress, stowing away the wet linen on her yoke.... "I see him dive; then he came up again, then he sank a second time, and came up again, and cried, 'I'm drowning, help!' And then he went down again — and up came a lot of bubbles. And while I was looking on, the muzhik got drowned. And so I give the alarm: 'Help! a muzhik is drowning!'"

And the laundress, lifting the yoke upon her shoulder, turning to one side, went along the narrow foot-path away from the pond.

"See! what a shame," says Yakof Ivanof, the overseer, in a despairing voice; "now there'll be a rumpus with the police court[2].... we'll have enough of it."

One muzhik with a scythe makes his way through the throng of peasant women, children, and old men gathered round the shore, and, hanging the scythe on the limb of a willow, leisurely takes off his clothes.

"Where was it? where was he drowned?" I keep

[1] *Prikashchik.* [2] *Zemski sut.*

asking, having still the desire to jump in, and do something extraordinary.

They point out to me the smooth surface of the pond, which is now and then just ruffled by the puffs of the breeze. It is incomprehensible how he came to drown; for the water lies so smooth, beautiful, and calm above him, shining golden in the midday sun, and I realize that I cannot do anything or surprise any one, the more as I am a very poor swimmer; but the muzhik is now pulling his shirt over his head, and instantly throws himself into the water. All look at him with hope and anxiety. But after going into the water up to his neck, the muzhik slowly turns back, and puts on his shirt again; he cannot swim.

People keep coming down to the shore, the throng grows larger and larger, the women cling to one another; but no one brings any help. Those that have just come, offer advice, and groan; fear and despair are stamped on all faces. Of those who had come first, some have sat down on the grass, weary of standing, others have gone back to their work. The old Matriona asks her daughter whether she shut the oven door. The small boy in his father's jacket industriously flings stones into the water.

And now from the house down the hill comes Trezorka, the butler's dog, barking, and looking back in perplexity. And lo! there is Feodor Filippuitch's tall figure hurrying from the hilltop, and shouting something as he comes out from behind the wild rose bush.

"What are you standing there for?" he shouts, taking off his coat as he runs. "A man drowning, and there you are standing around! Get a rope."

All look at Feodor Filippuitch with hope and fear while he, leaning his hand on the shoulder of one of the men-servants, pries off his left boot with the toe of the right.

"There it was, where the people are standing, there at the right of the willows, Feodor Filippuitch, right there," says some one to him.

"I know it," he replies; and, knitting his brows, prob-

ably as a rebuke to the manifestations of prudery visible among the women, he takes off his shirt and baptismal cross, handing them to the gardener boy who stands officiously near him, and then stepping energetically across the mown grass, comes to the pond.

Trezorka, in doubt as to the reason for his master's rapid motions, stands irresolute near the crowd, and noisily nibbles a few grass-blades on the shore, then looks questioningly at his master, and suddenly with a joyous bark plunges with him into the water. At first nothing can be seen except foam, and splashing water, which reached even to us. But soon Feodor Filippuitch, gracefully spreading his arms in long strokes, and with regular motion lifting and sinking his back, swims across to the other shore. Trezorka, however, gurgling in the water, hastily returns, shakes himself near the crowd, and rolls over on his back on the shore.

While Feodor Filippuitch is swimming to the other side, two coachmen hasten to the willows with a net fastened to a stake. Feodor Filippuitch for some reason lifts up his hands, dives once, twice, three times, each time spewing from his mouth a stream of water, gracefully shaking his long hair, and paying no heed to the questions which are showered on him from all sides. At last he comes to the shore, and, as well as I can make out, arranges for the disposition of the net.

They haul out the net, but it contains nothing except slime and a few small carp flopping in it. They are just casting the net once more as I reach that side.

The voice of the butler giving directions, the water dripping from the wet rope, and sighs of dismay, alone break the silence. The wet rope attached to the right wing covers up more and more of the grass, and slowly emerges farther and farther out of the water.

"Now all together, with a stronger pull once more!" cries the butler's voice. The net appears, dripping with water.

"There's something! it comes heavy, fellows," says some one's voice.

And here the wings, with two or three carp flapping

in them, are drawn to shore, wetting and crushing down the grass. And now, through the fine wavering bed of agitated water, something white gleams in the tightly stretched net. Not loud, but plainly audible amid the dead silence, a sigh of horror passes over the throng.

"Pull it up on the dry land! pull all together!" says the butler's resolute voice; and the drowned man is pulled up across the mown burdocks and other weeds, to the willows.

And here I see my good old auntie in her silk dress. I see her lilac sunshade with its fringe, — which somehow is incongruous with this picture of death terrible in its very simplicity, — and her face ready this moment to be convulsed with sobs. I recall the disappointment expressed on her face, because it was idle to use the arnica; and I recall the sickening melancholy feeling I have when she said with the simple egoism of love: —

"Let us go, my dear. Ah! how terrible this is! And here you always go in swimming by yourself."

I remember how bright and hot the sun shone on the dry ground crumpling under our feet; how it played on the mirror of the pond; how the plump carp flapped on the bank; how the schools of fish stirred the smooth surface in the middle of the pond; how a hawk hung high in the air, watching the ducklings quacking and spattering, as they swam through the reeds toward the center; how the white tumulous thunder-clouds gathered on the horizon; how the mud, brought up on the bank by the net, melted away; and how, as I came to the dike, I again heard the blows of the clothes-pounders at work along the pond.

But the clothes-pounder has a ringing sound; two clothes-pounders, as it were, ring together, making a chord; and this sound torments, pains me, the more as I know that this clothes-pounder is a bell, and Feodor Filippuitch could not succeed in stopping it. And this clothes-pounder, like an instrument of torture, squeezes my leg, which is freezing. — I fall into deep sleep.

I was waked by what seemed to me our very rapid progress, and by two voices speaking close to me.

"Say, Ignat, Ignat," says the voice of my driver. "You take my passenger; you've got to go anyway; it's only wasted labor for me, you take him."

Ignat's voice near me replies, "What fun would it be for me to answer for a passenger?.... Will you treat me to a half-pint of brandy?"

"Now! a half-pint! Call it a glass."

"The idea, a glass!" cries the other voice; "bother my horses for a glass of vodka!"

I open my eyes. Still the same unendurable whirling snowflakes dazzling me, the same drivers and horses, but next me I see some sledge or other. My driver had caught up with Ignat, and for some time we have been going side by side.

Notwithstanding the fact that the voice from the other sledge advises not to take less than the half-pint, Ignat suddenly reins up his troïka.

"Change the things; just your good luck! You'll give me the brandy when we meet to-morrow. Have you got much luggage?"

My driver, with unwonted liveliness, leaps into the snow, makes me a bow, and begs me to change into Ignat's sledge. I am perfectly willing. But evidently the God-fearing little muzhik is so delighted that he must needs pour out to some one his gratitude and delight. He bows to me, to Alyoshka, to Ignasha, and thanks us.

"Well, now, glory to God! What a scheme this is! Lord save us![1] we have been going half the night. Don't know ourselves where we are. He will take you, sir[2]; but my horses are all beat out."

And he transfers the luggage with vigorous activity.

When it was moved, I got into the other sledge in spite of the wind which almost carried me away. The sledge, especially on that side on which was spread the coat as a protection against the wind, for the two yamshchiks, was a quarter buried in the snow; but behind the coat, it was warm and cozy. The little old man was lying as before with his legs hanging over, and the story-teller was still spinning his yarn: "At that very same

[1] *Gospodi-batyushka.* [2] *Batyushka-barin.*

time when the general in the king's name, you know, comes to Marya, you know, in the darkness, at this same time, Marya says to him, 'General, I do not need you, and I cannot love you; and, you know, you are not my lover, but my lover is the prince himself.' — At this very time," he was going on to say; but, catching sight of me, he kept silence for a time, and began to puff at his pipe.

"Well, barin, have you come to hear the story?" said the other, whom I have called the advice-giver.

"Yes; but you are having a gay time, a splendid time behind here," said I.

"Out of sheer dullness, — have to keep ourselves from thinking."

"But, say, don't you know where we are now?"

This question, as it seemed to me, did not please the yamshchiks.

"Who can tell where we are? Maybe we are going to the Kalmucks," replied the advice-giver.

"But what are we going to do?" I asked.

"What are we going to do? Well, we are going, and will keep on going," he said, in a fretful tone.

"Well, what will keep us from getting lost? Besides, the horses will get tired in the snow. What then?"

"Well, nothing."

"But we may freeze to death."

"Of course we may, because we don't see any hayricks just now; but we may come, you know, to the Kalmucks. First thing, we must look at the snow."

"But you are n't afraid of freezing to death, are you, barin?" asked the little old man, with quavering voice.

Notwithstanding that he was making sport of me, as it were, it was plain that he was trembling all over.

"Yes; it is growing very cold," I replied.

"Ekh! barin! You ought to do like me. No, no; stamp up and down, — that will warm you up."

"Do it the first thing when you get to the sledge," said the advice-giver.

CHAPTER VII

"If you please, all ready!" shouted Alyoshka from the front sledge.

The storm was so fierce that only by main force, leaning far forward and holding down the folds of my cloak with both hands, was I able to make my way through the whirling snow, drifting before the wind under my very feet, over the short distance between me and the sledge. My former driver was still on his knees in the middle of the empty sledge; but when he saw me going he took off his big cap, the wind angrily tossing up his hair, and asked me for vodka money. Evidently he did not expect me to give it to him, because my refusal did not affront him in the least. He even thanked me, waved his cap, and said, "Well, good luck to you, sir!"[1] and picking up the reins, and clucking to the horses, turned from us.

Immediately Ignashka straightened his back, and shouted to his horses. Again the sound of crunching hoofs, voices, bells, took the place of the howling wind, which was chiefly audible when we stood still. For a quarter of an hour after my transfer I did not sleep, and I diverted my mind by contemplating the form of my new driver and horses. Ignashka was youthful in appearance, was constantly jumping up, cracking his whip over the horses, shouting out, changing from one leg to the other, and leaning forward to fix the breeching for the shaft-horse, which kept slipping to one side. He was not tall in stature, but well-built, as it seemed. Over his unlined sheepskin coat he wore an ungirdled cloak, the collar of which was almost turned back; his neck was perfectly bare; his boots were of leather, not felt; and he wore a small cap which he kept taking off and straightening. His ears were protected only by his hair. In all his motions was manifest not only energy, but much more, as it seemed to me, the desire to keep his energy alive.

[1] *Nu, daï Bog vam, barin.*

However, the farther we went, the more frequently he settled himself on his seat, changed the position of his legs, and addressed himself to Alyoshka and me; it seemed to me that he was afraid of losing his spirits. And there was good reason; though the horses were excellent, the road each step grew heavier and heavier, and it was noticeable that the horses' strength was flagging. It was already necessary to use the whip; and the shaft-horse, a good, big, shaggy animal, stumbled once or twice, though immediately, as if frightened, it sprang forward and tossed up its shaggy head almost to the bell itself.

The right off horse, which I could not help watching, had a long leather breeching adorned with tassels, slipping and sliding to the left, and kept dropping the traces, and required the whip; but like a good and even zealous horse, seemed to be vexed at its own weakness, and angrily tossed its head, as if asking to be driven.

Indeed, it was terrible to see how, as the storm and cold increased, the horses grew weak, the road became worse; and we really did not know where we were, or where we were going, whether to a station or to any shelter whatever. And strange and ridiculous it was to hear the bells jingling so merrily and carelessly, and Ignatka shouting so energetically and delightfully as if it were a sunny Christmas noon, and we were hurrying to a festival along the village street; and stranger than all it was to think that we were all the time riding and riding rapidly away from the place where we had been.

Ignat began to sing some song in a horrible falsetto, but so loud and with such intervals, during which he whistled, that it was weird to listen to, and made one melancholy.

"Hey-y-y! Why are you splitting your throat, Ignat? Hold on a bit!" said the voice of the advice-giver.

"What?"

"Hold o-o-o-o-n!"

Ignat reined up. Again silence, only broken by the wailing and whistling of the wind, while the snow began

to pile up, rustling on the sledge. The advice-giver drove up to us.

"Well, what is it?"

"Say! where are you going?"

"Who knows?"

"Are your feet frozen, that you stamp so?"

"They're frozen off."

"Well, you ought to go this way. The way you were going means starvation, — not even a Kalmuck there. Get out, and it will warm your legs."

"All right. Hold the horses — there."

And Ignat stumped off in the direction indicated.

"Have to keep looking all the time, have to get out and hunt; then you find the way. But this way's a crazy way to go," said the advice-giver. "See how tired the horses are."

All the time Ignat was gone, and it was so long that I actually began to be afraid that he had lost his way, the advice-giver kept talking to me in a self-confident, easy tone, telling me how one ought to behave in a snowstorm; how the best thing of all was to unhitch one of the horses, and let her go as God Almighty should direct; how sometimes you can see the stars; and how, if he had taken the front place, we should have been at the station long before.

"Well, how is it?" he asked, as Ignat came back, plowing with difficulty knee-deep in snow.

"Not so bad. I found a Kalmuck camp," replied Ignat, out of breath. "Still, I don't know where we are. It must be that we have been going toward the Prolgovsky datcha. We must bear off to the left."

"Why worry? It must be the camp just behind our station," replied the advice-giver.

"I tell you it is n't."

"Well, I've seen it, and so I know. If it is n't that, then it's Tamuishevsko. You must bear more to the right; and soon we'll be on the big bridge, — eight versts."

"Say what you will, 't ain't so. I have seen it," said Ignat, angrily.

"Eh! what's that? I am a yamshchik as much as you are."

"Fine yamshchik! you go ahead, then."

"Why should I go ahead? But I know."

Ignat was evidently angry. Without replying, he climbed to his seat, and drove on.

"You see how cold one's feet get. No way to warm them," said he to Alyoshka, pounding his feet more and more frequently, and brushing and shaking off the snow which had got into his boot-legs.

I felt an uncontrollable desire to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

"Can it be that I am going to freeze to death?" I asked myself, as I dropped off. "Death, they say, always begins with drowsiness. It's much better to drown than freeze to death, then they would pull me out in the net. However, it makes no difference whether one drowns or freezes to death. If only this stake did not stick into my back so, I might forget myself."

For a second I lost consciousness.

"How will all this end?" I suddenly asked myself in thought, for a moment opening my eyes, and gazing at the white expanse, — "how will it end? If we don't find some hayricks, and the horses get winded, as it seems likely they will be very soon, we shall all freeze to death."

I confess that, though I was afraid, I had a desire for something extraordinary, something rather tragic, to happen to us; and this was stronger than the small fear. It seemed to me that it would not be a bad thing if at morning the horses themselves should bring us, half-frozen, to some far-off, unknown village, where some of us might even perish of the cold.

And while I have this thought, my imagination works with extraordinary clearness and rapidity. The horses become weary, the snow grows deeper and deeper, and

now only the ears and the bell-bow are visible; but suddenly Ignashka appears on horseback, driving his troïka past us. We beseech him, we shout to him, to take us; but the wind carries away our voices; we have no voices left. Ignashka laughs at us, shouts to his horses, whistles, and passes out of our sight in some deep snow-covered ravine. A little old man climbs up on a horse, flaps his elbows, and tries to gallop after him; but he cannot stir from the place. My former driver, with his great cap, throws himself on him, drags him to the ground, and tramples him into the snow.

"You're a wizard — a koldun!" he cries. "You're a spitfire. We are all lost on your account."

But the little old man flings a snowball at his head. He is no longer a little old man, but only a hare, and bounds away from us. All the dogs bound after him. The advice-giver, who is now Feodor Filippuitch, tells us to sit around in a circle, that nothing will happen to us if we protect ourselves with snow; it will be warm.

In fact, it is warm and cozy; our only trouble is thirst. I get out my traveling-case; I offer every one rum and sugar, and I myself drink with great satisfaction. The story-teller spins some yarn about the rainbow, and over our heads is a ceiling of snow and a rainbow.

"Now each of you," I say, "make a chamber in the snow, and go to sleep."

Snow is as soft and warm as wool. I make myself a room, and am just going into it; but Feodor Filippuitch, who has caught a glimpse of my money in my traveling case, says, "Hold! give me your money, you won't need it when you're dead," and seizes me by the leg. I hand him the money, asking him only to let me go; but they will not believe that it is all the money I have, and they are going to kill me. I seize the old man's hand and with indescribable pleasure kiss it; the old man's hand is tender and soft. At first he takes it away from me, but afterward he lets me have it, and even caresses me with his other hand.

Nevertheless, Feodor Filippuitch comes near and threatens me. I hasten to my chamber; it is not a chamber, but a long white corridor, and some one pulls back on my leg. I tear myself away. In the hand of the man who holds me back, remain my trousers and a part of my skin; but I feel only cold and ashamed, — all the more ashamed because my auntie with her sun-shade, and homeopathic pellets, comes arm in arm with the drowned man to meet me. They smile, but do not understand the signs that I make to them. I fling myself on the sledge; my feet drag over the snow, but the little old man follows after me, flapping his elbows. He comes close to me. But I hear just in front of me two church-bells, and I know that I shall be safe when I reach them. The church-bells ring louder and louder; but the little old man has caught up with me, and falls with his body across my face, so that I can scarcely hear the bells. Once more I seize his hand, and begin to kiss it; but the little old man is no longer the little old man, but the drowned man, and he cries:—

"Ignashka, hold on! here are Akhmet's hayricks! just look!"

That is too terrible! no, I had better wake up. I open my eyes. The wind is flapping the tails of Alyoshka's cloak into my face; my knees are uncovered. We are going over the bare crust, and the triad of the bells rings pleasantly through the air with its clashing fifth.

I look, expecting to see the hayricks; but instead of hayricks, now that my eyes are wide open, I see something like a house with a balcony, and the crenelated walls of a fortress. I feel very little interest in seeing this house and fortress; my desire is much stronger to see the white corridor where I had been walking, to hear the sound of the church-bell, and to kiss the little old man's hand. Again I close my eyes and fall asleep.

CHAPTER IX

I SLEPT soundly. But all the time I could hear the chords of the bells, and in my dream I could see, now a dog barking and jumping after me; then the organ, one stop of which I seemed to draw out; then the French poem which I am composing. Then it seemed to me that this triad was some instrument of torture with which my right foot was constantly compressed. This was so severe that I woke up, and opening my eyes I rubbed my leg. It was beginning to grow numb with cold.

The night was, as before, light, melancholy, white. The same motion kept shaking me and the sledge; Ignashka was still sitting on one side and stamping his feet. There was the off horse as before, straining her neck, lifting her feet, as she trotted over the deep snow; the tassel slipping along the reins, and whipping against the horse's belly; the head of the shaft-horse, with the waving mane, alternately pulling and loosening the reins attached to the bell-bow as it nodded up and down.

But all this was covered and hidden with snow far more than before. The snow was whirled about in front of us, and covered up our runners, and reached above the horses' knees, and fell thick and fast on our collars and caps. The wind blew now from the right, now from the left, and played with the collar and tails of Ignashka's cloak, the manes of the horses, and howled above the bell-bow and the shafts.

It had become fearfully cold; and I had scarcely lifted my head out of my collar ere the frosty dry snow made its way, rustling, into my eyelids, my nose, and my mouth, and ran down my neck. Looking around, all was white, light, and snowy; nothing anywhere except a melancholy light and the snow. In good earnest I can say it was terrible to me.

Alyoshka was sleeping as he sat cross-legged in the very depths of the sledge; his whole back was covered with a thick deposit of snow.

Ignashka did not become dejected; he kept pulling at

the reins, shouting, and stamping his feet. The bell also sounded strangely. The horses sometimes snorted, but plunged along more quietly, though they stumbled more and more often. Ignashka again sprang up, swung his mittens, and began to sing in his clear, strong voice. Without finishing his song he stopped the troïka, tossed the reins on the dasher, and got out. The wind howled madly; the snow, as if shoveled down, was dashed upon the folds of my furs.

I looked around. The third troïka was nowhere to be seen (it had stopped somewhere). Next the second troïka, in a mist of snow, could be seen the little old man making his way with long strides. Ignashka went three steps from the sledge, sat down in the snow, took off his girdle, and began to remove his boots.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Must change my boots; otherwise this leg will be frozen solid," he replied, and went on with his work.

It was cold for me to keep my neck out of my collar to watch how he did it. I sat straight, looking at the off horse, which, with legs spread, stood feebly switching its snow-covered tail. The thump which Ignat gave the sledge as he clambered to his place startled me.

"Well, where are we now?" I asked. "Are we getting anywhere in the world?"

"Don't you worry. We shall get there," he replied. "Now my feet are thoroughly warm, since I changed them."

And he drove on; the bells jingled, the sledge again began to rock, and the wind whistled under the runners, and once more we struggled to swim through the limitless ocean of snow.

CHAPTER X

I SANK into a sound sleep. When Alyoshka awoke me by punching me in the leg and I opened my eyes, it was already morning. It seemed even colder than it had been during the night. It was no longer snowing;

but a strong dry wind still swept the powdery snow across the plain, and especially under the hoofs of the horses, and the runners of the sledge.

The sky on the right toward the east was of a deep purple color, but bright oblique stripes of reddish orange kept growing more and more clearly defined in it; above our heads, behind the hurrying, white clouds, scarcely tinged as yet, gleamed the pallid blue of the sky; in the west the clouds were bright, light, and shifting.

Everywhere around, as far as the eye could see, lay the snow, white and deep, in sharply defined strata. Here and there could be seen gray mounds where lay the fine, dry, powdery snow. Not a track was to be seen, — not that of a sledge, or of a human being, or of a beast. The outline and color of the driver's back, and of the horses, began to stand out clear and sharp against the white background. ....

The rim of Ignashka's dark blue cap, his collar, his hair, and even his boots, were white. The sledge was perfectly covered. The whole right side and the mane of the brown shaft-horse were plastered with snow. The legs of my off horse were thick with it up to the knee, and the whole of the shaggy right flank where the sweat had dampened it had the same sticky covering. The tassel as before leaped up and down in a sort of rhythm, the structure of which it would not be easy to represent; and the off horse kept galloping on; only by the gaunt belly rising and sinking, and by the hanging ears, could it be seen how tired she was.

Only one new object attracted the attention; this was a verst-post, from which the snow had been blown away, leaving it clear to the ground, and around which the wind had drifted a perfect mountain on one side and was still sweeping the friable snow across, and drifting it from one side to the other.

I was greatly amazed that we had gone the whole night without change of horses, not knowing for twelve hours where we were, and not coming to our destination, and yet not really missing the road. Our bells seemed

to sound more cheerfully than ever. Ignat buttoned his coat up, and began to shout again. Behind us snorted the horses and jingled the bells of the troïka that carried the little old man and the advice-giver; but the man who was asleep had wandered away from us somewhere on the steppe.

After going half a verst farther, we struck the fresh, and as yet unobliterated, track of a sledge and troïka; and occasionally pink spots of blood, caused apparently by the whip on the horses' side, could be seen.

"That was Filipp. See, he's got in ahead of us," said Ignashka.

But here appears a little house with a sign, alone by itself, near the road, standing in the midst of the snow, which covers it almost to the roof. Near the inn stands a troïka of gray horses, their hair rough with sweat, with wide-spread legs and drooping heads. At the door the snow is shoveled away, and the shovel is standing in it; but it still blows down from the roof, and the roaring wind whirls the snow around.

Out from the door at the sound of our bells comes a big, ruddy, red-headed driver, with a glass of wine in his hand, and shouts something. Ignashka turns to me, and asks permission to stop. Then for the first time I fairly see his face.

CHAPTER XI

His features were not dark, dry, and regular, as I had reason to expect from his hair and build. His face was round, jolly, with a snub nose and a big mouth, and clear-shining eyes, blue and round. His cheeks and neck were like well-worn cloth. His eyebrows, his long eyelashes, and the beard which evenly covered the lower part of his face, were crusted thick with snow, and perfectly white.

The distance to the station was all of a half-verst, and we stopped.

"Only be quick about it," I said.

"Just a minute," replied Ignashka, springing down from his seat, and going up to Filipp.

"Let us have it, brother," said he, taking the glass in his right hand; and, throwing his mitten and whip down on the snow, tipping back his head, he drank down at a gulp the glass of vodka.

The innkeeper, who must have been a discharged Cossack, came, with a bottle in his hand, out of the door.

"Who have you got there?" he asked.

The tall Vasili, a lean, blond muzhik with a goatee, and the fat councilor, with white eyebrows, and a thick white beard framing his ruddy face, came up and also drank a glass. The little old man joined the group of drinkers; but no one offered him anything, and he went off again to his horses, fastened behind, and began to stroke one of them on the back and side.

The little old man was pretty much what I had imagined him to be: small, ugly, with wrinkled, strongly marked features, a thin little beard, a sharp nose, and worn yellow teeth. He wore a driver's cap, perfectly new; but his sheepskin jacket[1] was old, soiled with oil, and torn on the shoulders and flaps, and did not cover his knees or his hempen trousers tucked into his huge felt boots. He himself was bent, and he kept frowning, and, with trembling lips and limbs, tramped around his sledge, evidently trying to keep warm.

"Well, Mitritch, you ought to have a drink; it would warm you up," said the advice-giver to him.

Mitritch gave a start. He arranged the horses' harness, straightened the bell-bow, and then came to me.

"Say, barin," said he, taking his cap off from his white hair and bowing very low, "all night long we have been wandering together; we have found the road. We would seem to deserve a bit of a drink. Isn't that so, sir, your eminence?[2] just enough to get warmed," he added, with an obsequious smile.

I gave him a quarter-ruble. The innkeeper brought out a glass of vodka, and handed it to the old man. He laid aside his mitten and whip, and took the glass in

[1] *Polushubchishka.* [2] *Batyushka, vashe siyatelstvo.*

his small, dark hand, bony and somewhat bluish; but strangely enough he could not control his thumb. He could not hold the glass, but dropped it in the snow, spilling the wine.

All the drivers burst out laughing.

"See, Mitritch-to is half-frozen like; he can't hold his wine."

But Mitritch was greatly vexed because he had spilt the wine.

They brought him, however, another glass, and poured it into his mouth. He immediately became jolly, went into the inn, lighted his pipe, began to show his yellow worn teeth, and to scold at every word. After they had taken their last drinks, the drivers came back to their troïkas, and we set off.

The snow kept growing whiter and brighter, till it made one's eyes ache to look at it. The orange-colored reddish streaks stretched brighter and brighter, higher and higher, across the heavens; now the red circle of the sun appeared on the horizon through dove-colored clouds; the blue sky kept growing brighter and deeper. On the road around the station the tracks were clear, distinct, and yellow; in some places were cradle-holes. In the frosty, bracing atmosphere, there was a pleasant exhilaration and freshness.

My troïka glided along very swiftly. The head of the shaft-horse, and the neck with the mane tossing up to the bell-bow, constantly made the same quick, swinging motions under the hunting-bell, the tongue of which no longer struck, but scraped around the rim. The good side horses, in friendly rivalry tugging at the frozen, twisted traces, energetically galloped on, the tassels striking against their ribs and necks. Occasionally the off horse would plunge into some drift, and kick up the snow, filling our eyes with the fine powder. Ignashka kept shouting in his gay tenor. The runners creaked over the dry, frosty snow. Behind us, with a loud festival sound, rang the two sledge-chimes; and the voices of the drivers, made jolly by wine, could be heard.

I looked back; the gray, shaggy side horses, arching

their necks, regularly puffing out the breath, with their curved bits, galloped over the snow. Filipp was flourishing his whip and adjusting his cap. The little old man, with his legs hanging out, was reclining as before in the middle of his sledge.

At the end of two minutes the sledge scraped against the boards of the well-cleared entrance of the station-house; and Ignashka turned to me, his jolly face covered with snow, where his breath had turned to ice, and said:—

"Here we are, barin!"

POLIKUSHKA

A STORY

CHAPTER I

"AS you may please to order, my lady. But it would be too bad to send any of the Dutlofs. They are all, without exception, good boys; but if you don't take one of the house-servants,[1] you will have to send one of them without fail," said the overseer; "and now all point to them. However, as you wish."

And he placed his right hand on his left, holding them both over his stomach, tipped his head on one side, sucked in his thin lips, almost smacking them, turned away his eyes, and held his peace, with the evident intention of holding it long, and of listening without reply to all the nonsense which the mistress might say to him in reply to this.

The overseer, who was one of the household-servants, was presenting his report to his mistress this autumn

[1] Previous to 1861, when the Emperor Alexander II. signed the Ukase of Emancipation, most of the serfs in Russia were attached to the land, and could not be sold apart from it. Others, called *dvorovui*, constituted the class of domestic servants, and plied various trades. Their owners gave them monthly rations or a small allowance for rations. Often they were allowed to go to the large cities on *obrok*, a sort of leave of absence, for which they paid their masters out of their earnings. The *barin* or *baruin'ya* — that is, the lord or lady of the estate — had the right to excuse any one from the conscription; but, unless a substitute were sent, a sum of money was required. Other things being equal, the draft was made first on families where there were three or more grown-up men besides the head of the house, the *troïniki*; next, on the *dvoïniki*, families where there were two grown-up sons or nephews; and, last of all, where there was only one. Families where several generations, and even with collateral branches, lived under one roof, were generally more prosperous than those where the sons scattered, and took separate farms. — ED.

evening, and he stood before her, clean-shaven, in his long coat, the special dress of the overseer.

The report, as the mistress understood it, consisted in giving an account of the management of the estate for the past season, and in making arrangements for the one to come.

As Yegor Mikhaïlovitch the overseer understood it, the report was a ceremony during which he stood in a corner firmly on his two feet, set wide apart, with his face turned to the divan, listening to all the good lady's unending and aimless babble, and leading her by various expedients to the point of saying hastily and impatiently, "Very good, very good," to all his suggestions.

The point at issue now was the conscription. Three soldiers had to be sent from Pokrovskoye. Two were unquestionably named by Providence itself, with a due regard for family, moral, and economical conditions. Concerning them there could be neither hesitation nor quarrel on the part of the Commune,[1] or the mistress, or the people in general.

The third was in doubt. The overseer wanted to avoid sending any of the three Dutlofs, and proposed Polikushka, a servant who had a family and a very bad reputation, having more than once been convicted of stealing corn, reins, and hay; but the mistress, who had often caressed Polikushka's ragged children, and by means of evangelical teachings had improved his morals, did not wish to let him go. At the same time she had no ill-will against the Dutlofs, whom she did not know and had never seen. And so she could not come to any decision at all, and the overseer had not hitherto ventured to explain to her explicitly that if Polikushka did not go Dutlof would have to go.

"Well, I don't wish to cause the Dutlofs any unhappiness," she said, with feeling.

"If you don't want them to go, then pay three hundred rubles for a substitute," was the reply that he should have made her; but his diplomacy was not equal to such an emergency.

[1] *Mir.*

And so Yegor Mikhaïlovitch straightened himself up calmly, even leaned slightly on the door-post, and with a certain obsequiousness in his face watched how his mistress moved her lips, and how the shadow of the ruching on her head-dress moved up and down on the wall under the picture. But he did not find it necessary to penetrate the meaning of her words. She spoke long and rapidly. Back of his ears occurred the convulsion of a yawn, but he adroitly changed it into a cough, which he hid with his hand, making a hypocritical noise.

Not long ago I saw Lord Palmerston sitting with his hat on at the time when, as a member of the opposition, he was attacking the ministry, and, suddenly rising, replied in a three hours' speech to all the points of his opponent. I saw that, and was not filled with amazement, because something not unlike it I had seen a thousand times in the dealings of Yegor Mikhaïlovitch with his mistress.

Either because he was afraid of going to sleep, or because it seemed to him that she had already gone to great lengths, he shifted the weight of his body from his left leg to his right, and began with the sacramental preordium as he always began: —

"As you please, my lady .... only .... only .... the Commune is to meet at my office, and it must be decided. In the requisition it says that Pokrovskoye must send a recruit to the city. And out of all the serfs, they point to the Dutlofs, and to no one else. But the commune does n't care for your interests; it 's all the same to them if we ruin the Dutlofs. You see, I know how they have been struggling to get along. Since I have had charge, they have been in the depths of poverty. Now that the old man is just about to have his young nephew's help, we 've got to put them down again. But I, you will please take notice, am working as much for your interest as my own. 'T is too bad, my lady, that you should set your mind on it so. They are no kith or kin of mine, and I have had nothing from them." ....

"Oh, I did n't think, Yegor," interrupted the lady, and

immediately she felt convinced that he had been bribed by the Dutlofs.

"And they've got the best-kept place in all Pokrovskoye; God-fearing, work-loving muzhiks. The old man has been an elder in the church[1] for thirty years. He does n't drink wine, or use bad language, and he 's a church-goer." — The overseer knew how to be plausible. — "And the main thing, allow me to inform you, is that he has but two sons, while the others are nephews. It is the Mir that orders, but by good rights he should have the privilege of a 'two-sons family' lot. Other families, even with three sons in the house, have divided into several households because they were shiftless, improvident; and now they are the gainers, while these have to suffer for their very virtuousness."

The lady did not understand this at all, — did not understand what he meant by "cast lots," and "virtue." She heard only sounds, and she looked at the nankeen buttons on the overseer's coat; the upper button it seemed he rarely fastened, so that it was on tight; but the strain had come on the middle one, and it hung by a thread, so that it would soon need to be sewed on again. But, as everybody knows, it is absolutely unnecessary in a business conversation for you to understand what is said, but it is necessary only to bear in mind what you yourself wish to say. And the lady acted on this principle.

"Why can't you understand, Yegor Mikhaïlovitch?" said she. "I am sure I don't wish any of the Dutlofs to go as a soldier. I should think that, as well as you know me, you might feel assured that I would do everything in my power to help my people, and that I do not wish them any misfortune. You know I would be ready to sacrifice everything to avoid this wretched necessity, and prevent either of the men from going." — I know not whether it came into the overseer's head that the avoidance of the wretched necessity did not require the sac-

[1] *Starosta tserkovnui*, a small office, including the duty of selling candles, etc. It is a post of some honor, with no pay attached, and all the income from it goes to the church.

rifice of everything, but merely of three hundred rubles; but this thought might have easily occurred to him. — "One thing I assure you, and that is, I will not on any consideration let Polikeï go. When, after that affair of the clock, he confessed to me, and wept and vowed that he would reform, I had a long talk with him; and I saw that he was touched, and that he really repented."

"Well, she's in for it," thought Yegor Mikhaïlovitch, and began to gaze at the jam which stood in a glass of water by her side. "Is it orange, or lemon? I think it must taste bitter," he said to himself.

"Since that time seven months have passed, and he has not been once drunk, and he has behaved admirably. His wife told me that he had become another man. And now, why do you wish me to punish him, when he has reformed? Yes; and would n't it be inhumane, to send a man who has five children, and no one to help him? No, you had better not speak about that, Yegor." .... And the lady took a sip from the glass.

Yegor Mikhaïlovitch watched the water disappearing down her throat, and consequently his answer was short and dry: —

"Then you order one of the Dutlofs to be sent?"

The lady clasped her hands.

"Why can't you understand me? Do I wish to make Dutlof unhappy? Have I anything against him? God is my witness how ready I am to do everything for them." — She glanced at the picture in the corner, but remembered that it was not a holy picture. "Well, it 's all the same, that 's not the point at all," she thought. Again it was strange that it did not occur to offer the three hundred rubles! — "But what can I do about it? Do I know the ways and means? I have no way of knowing. Well, I depend on you; you know my wishes. Do what you can to satisfy every one; but have it legal. What 's to be done? They are not the only ones. Troublous times come to all. Only, Polikeï must not be sent. You must know that that would be terrible from my point of view."

She would have gone on speaking, — she was so ex-

cited, — but just then a chambermaid came into the room.

"What is it, Dunyasha?"

"A muzhik is here, and asks for Yegor Mikhaïluitch; they are waiting for him at the meeting," said Dunyasha, and looked angrily at Yegor Mikhaïlovitch. "What an overseer he is!" she said to herself, "stirring up my mistress. Now she won't get to sleep till two o'clock again."

"Go then, Yegor," said the lady. "Do the best you can."

"I obey. [He now said nothing at all about Dutlof.] But shall I send to the gardener for the money?"

"Has n't Petrushka got back from town?"

"Not yet."

"But can't Nikolaï go?"

"Father[1] is sick abed with the lumbago," said Dunyasha.

"Won't you have me go to-morrow?" asked the overseer.

"No, you are needed here, Yegor." The lady paused to consider. "How much money?"

"Four hundred and sixty-two rubles."

"Send Polikeï to me," said the lady, looking resolutely into Yegor's face.

Yegor Mikhaïlof, not opening his teeth, stretched his lips into a sort of smile, but did not alter his expression.

"Very well."

"Send him to me."

"Very well."

And Yegor Mikhaïlovitch went to his office.

CHAPTER II

Polikeï, as an insignificant and disreputable man, and, moreover, from another village, had neither the housekeeper nor the butler, neither the overseer nor the housemaid, to look out for his interests. And his *corner*,

[1] *Tyatenka.*

where he lived with his wife and five children, was as wretched as it could be.

The *corners* had been arranged by the late proprietor as follows: In the middle of the *izba*, or hut, which was about twenty-five feet square, and built of stone, stood the great Russian stove; around it ran a co*ll*idor, as the servants called it; and in the corner quarters were partitioned off by boards. Of course there was not much room, especially in Polikeï's *corner*, which was next the door. The nuptial couch, with quilted counterpane and cotton pillows; a cradle with a baby in it; a three-legged table which served for cooking, washing, piling up all the household utensils, and as a work-table for Polikeï, who was a horse-doctor; tubs, clothes, hens, a calf, and the seven members of the household, — occupied the corner; and there would not have been room to move, had it not been that the common stove offered its share of room (though even this was covered with things and human beings), and that it was possible to get out on the door-steps. Even this was not always possible, if you stop to think; in October it is cold, and there was only one warm sheepskin garment for the whole family. And so the young children were obliged to get warm by running about, and the older ones by working and taking turns in climbing up on the big stove, where the temperature was as high as forty degrees Réaumur. It would seem as if it must have been terrible to live under such conditions, but they did not find it so; they managed to get along.

Akulina did the washing and mending for her husband and children; she spun and wove and bleached her linen; she cooked and baked at the common stove, and scolded and quarreled with her neighbors. The monthly rations sufficed not only for the children, but also for the feed of the cow. Firewood was plentiful, so was fodder for the cattle; hay also from the stable fell to their share. They had a little strip of kitchen-garden. The cow would calve; then they had their hens. Polikeï was at the stable, he picked up a pair of young colts, he bled horses and cattle; he cleaned their hoofs, he

tapped varicose veins, and made a salve of peculiar virtue, and this brought him in some money and provisions. Some of the oats belonging to the estate also made their way into his possession; in the village there was a man who regularly once a month, for two measures, gave twenty pounds of mutton.

It would have been easy for them to get along, had it not been for moral suffering. But this suffering was severe for the whole family. Polikeï had been from childhood in a stable, in another village. The groom who had charge of him was the worst thief in the neighborhood; the Commune banished him to Siberia. Polikeï soon began to follow this groom's example, and thus became from early youth accustomed to *these little tricks*, so that afterward, when he would have been glad to break loose from the habit, he could not.

He was young and weak; he had no father or mother, and his education had been neglected. He liked to get drunk, but he did not like to see things lying round loose; whether it were ropes or saddle, lock or coupling-bolt, or anything even more costly, no matter, it found its way into Polikeï's possession. Everywhere were men who would take these things, and pay for them in wine or money according to agreement. Money gained this way comes easy, the people say; no learning is needed, no hard work, or anything; and if you try it once, you won't like other work. One thing, however, is not good in such labors: however cheaply and easily things are acquired in this way, and however pleasant life becomes, still there is danger that disaffected people may suddenly object to your profession, and cause you tears, and make your life unhappy.

This was what happened in Polikeï's case. He got married, and God gave him great happiness; his wife, the daughter of a herder, proved to be a healthy, bright, industrious woman. Their children came in quick succession. Polikeï had not entirely abandoned his trâde, and all was going well.

Suddenly temptation came to him, and he fell; and it was a mere trifle that caused his fall. He secreted a

pair of leather reins that belonged to a muzhik. He was detected, thrashed, taken to the mistress, and afterward watched. A second time, a third time, he fell. The people began to make complaints. The overseer threatened to send him to the army; the lady of the house expostulated; his wife wept, and began to pine away: in fact, everything went entirely wrong. As a man, he was kindly, and not naturally bad, but weak; he loved to drink, and he had such a strong taste for it, that he could not resist. His wife would scold him and even beat him when he came in drunk, but he would weep.

"Wretched man that I am," he would say, "what shall I do? Tear out my eyes. I will swear off, I won't do it again."

But, lo! in a month's time he goes out, gets drunk, and is not seen for two days.

"Where on earth does he get the money to go on sprees?" the people asked themselves. His latest escapade was in the matter of the office clock. In the office there was an old clock hanging on the wall. It had not gone for years. Polikeĭ got into the office alone when it happened to be unlocked He took a fancy to the clock, carried it off, and disposed of it in town. By a kind of fatality the shop-keeper to whom he sold it came out on some holiday to visit his daughter, who was married to one of the house-servants; and he happened to mention the clock. An investigation was made, though it was hardly necessary. The overseer especially disliked Polikeĭ. The theft was traced to him. They laid the matter before the lady of the house. The lady of the house summoned Polikeĭ. He fell at her feet, and with touching contrition confessed everything, as his wife had counseled him to do. He did it very well. The lady began to reason with him. She talked and she talked, she lectured and she lectured, about God and duty and the future life, and about his wife, and about his children; and she affected him to tears. The lady said:—

"I will forgive you, only promise me that you will never do it again."

"Never in the world. May the earth swallow me, may I be torn in pieces!" said Polikeï, and he wept in a touching manner.

Polikeï went home, and at home wept all day like a calf, and lay on the stove. From that time forth there was no more fault to be found with Polikeï. But his life ceased to be happy. The people regarded him as a thief; and now that the hour of conscription had come, all began to suggest him as a victim.

Polikeï was a horse-doctor, as we have already said. How he so suddenly developed into a horse-doctor was a mystery to every one, and to himself most of all. In the stable where he had been with the groom who had been exiled to Siberia, he had fulfilled no other duty than that of clearing manure out of the stalls, or occasionally currying the horses, and carrying water. He could not have learned it there. Then he became a weaver; then he worked in a garden, and cleared paths; then he got leave of absence, and became a porter[1] for a merchant. But he could have got no practice there. But when he was last at home somehow or other, little by little, his reputation began to spread for having an extraordinary, if not even supernatural, knowledge of the ailments of horses.

He let blood two or three times; then he tripped up a horse, and made an incision in its fetlock; then he asked to have the horse brought to a stall, and began to cut her with a needle until the blood came, although she kicked, and even squealed; and he said that this was meant "to let the blood out from under the hoof." Then he explained to a muzhik that it was necessary to bleed the veins in both frogs "for greater comfort," and he began to strike his wooden mallet on the blunt lancet. Then under the belly of the dvornik's horse he put a tourniquet made of a woman's kerchief. Finally he would scatter oil of vitriol over all the wounds, pour out something from a bottle, and occasionally give medicine for internal use, as it occurred to him. And the more he tormented and killed the poor horses, the more

[1] *Dvornik.*

people believed in him, and brought him their horses to cure.

I feel that it is not quite seemly of us gentlemen to make sport of Polikeï. The remedies which he employed to stimulate belief in him were the very same which were efficacious for our fathers, and will be efficacious for us and our children. The muzhik, as he held down the head of his one mare, which not only constituted his wealth, but was almost a part of his family, and watched, with both confidence and terror, Polikeï's face marked by a consequential frown, and his slender hands, with the sleeves rolled up, with which he managed always to pinch the very places that were most tender, and boldly to hack the living body with the secret thought, "Now here's to luck," and making believe that he knew where the blood was, and where the matter, where was the dry and where was the fluid vein, and holding in his teeth the rag of healing or the vial of sulphuric acid, — this muzhik could not imagine such a thing as Polikeï raising his hand to cut without the requisite knowledge. He himself could not have done such a thing. And, as soon as the incision was made, he did not reproach himself because he had hacked unnecessarily.

I don't know how it is with you; but I have had experience with a doctor who, at my own request, treated people who were very dear to my heart in almost exactly the same way. The lancet and the mysterious whitish vial with corrosive sublimate and the words, "*apoplexy*, *hemorrhoids*, *blood-letting*, *pus*," and so forth, are they so different from "*nerves*, *rheumatism*, *organism*," and the others? *Wage du zu irren und zu träumen* — "Dare to be in error and to dream" — was said not only to poets, but to doctors and farriers.

CHAPTER III

On that very evening, while the elders who had come together at the office to choose a recruit were discussing amid the chill darkness of the October night, Polikeï

was sitting on the edge of his bed at the table, and was triturating in a bottle some veterinary medicament, the nature of which he himself knew not. It was a mixture of corrosive sublimate, sulphur, Glauber's salts, and grass, which he was compounding, with the notion that this grass was good for broken wind, and with the expectation of prescribing it for other ailments also.

The children had already gone to bed: two on the stove, two on the couch, one in the cradle, beside which sat Akulina with her spinning. The candle-end, which remained from some of his mistress's that had not been properly put away and Polikeï had taken care of, stood in a wooden candle-stick on the window; and, in order that her husband might not be disturbed in his important task, Akulina got up to snuff the candle with her fingers.

There were conceited fellows who considered Polikeï as a worthless horse-doctor, and a worthless man. Others — and they were in the majority — considered him worthless as a man, but a great master of his calling. Akulina, notwithstanding the fact that she often berated and even beat her husband, considered him beyond a peradventure the first horse-doctor and the first man in the world.

Polikeï poured into the hollow of his hand some ingredient. (He did not use scales, and he spoke ironically of the Germans who used scales. "This," he would say, "is not an apothecary shop.") Polikeï hefted his ingredient in his hand, and shook it up; but it seemed to him too little in quantity, and, for the tenth time, he added more. "I will put it all in, it will have a better effect," he said to himself.

Akulina quickly looked up as she heard the voice of her lord and master, expecting orders; but, seeing that it was nothing that concerned her, she shrugged her shoulders. "Ho! great chemist! Where did he learn it all?" she thought to herself, and again took up her work. The paper from which the ingredient had been taken fell under the table. Akulina did not let this pass.

"Aniutka!"[1] she cried, "here, your father has dropped something: come and pick it up."

Aniutka stuck out her slender bare legs from under the dress that covered her, and, like a kitten, crept under the table, and picked up the paper.

"Here it is, papa," said she, and again plunged into the bed with her cold feet.

"Stop pushing me," whimpered her younger sister in a sleepy voice, hissing her s's.

"I'll give it to you," said Akulina, and both heads disappeared under the wrapper.

"If he will pay three silver rubles," muttered Polikeĭ, shaking the bottle, "I will cure his horse. Cheap enough," he added. "I've racked my brains for it. Come now, Akulina, go and borrow some tobacco of Nikita. We will pay it back to-morrow."

And Polikeĭ drew from his trousers a linden-wood pipe-stem which had once been painted, and that had sealing-wax for a mouthpiece, and began to put the pipe in order.

Akulina pushed aside her flax-wheel, and went out without a word, though it was very hard for her. Polikeĭ opened the cupboard, put away his medicine bottle, and applied to his mouth a jug, tipping it up; it was empty, the vodka was all gone. He scowled; but when his wife brought him the tobacco, and he had filled his pipe and begun to smoke, sitting on the couch, his face gleamed with complacency and the pride that a man feels when he has ended his day's work.

He was thinking how, on the morrow, he would seize the tongue of a horse, and pour into her mouth that marvelous mixture; or he was ruminating on the fact of how a man of importance met with no refusals, as was proved by Nikita sending him the tobacco; and the thought was pleasant to him.

Suddenly the door, which swung on one hinge, was flung open; and into the room came a girl from the *upper* house, — not the second girl, but a small damsel employed to run of errands. As every one knows, the

[1] Peasant diminutive for Anna.

barsky dom, or manor-house, is called *upper*, even though it may be built on a lower level. Aksiutka, as the damsel was called, always flew like a bullet; and while so doing her arms were not bent, but swung like pendulums, in proportion to the swiftness of her motions, not by her side, but in front of her body. Her cheeks were always redder than her pink dress; her tongue always ran as swiftly as her legs.

She flew into the room, and, holding by the stove, for some reason or other, she began to rock herself; and as if she wished to utter not less than two or three words at once, and scarcely stopping to get breath, she suddenly broke out as follows, addressing Akulina: —

"Our lady bids Polikeï Ilyitch to come up to the house this minute, — she does." ....

Here she stopped, and drew a long breath.

"Yegor Mikhaltch was at the house, and talked with our lady about the *n*ecruits; and they 've took Polikeï Ilyitch. .... Avdot'ya Mikolavna bids you come up this very minute. .... Avdot'ya Mikolavna bids you [again a long breath] come up this minute."

For thirty seconds Aksiutka stared at Polikeï, at Akulina, at the children, who were asleep under the wrapper; then she seized a hazel-nut shell that was rolling around on the stove, and threw it at Aniutka, and once more repeating, "Come up this minute," flew like a whirlwind out of the room; and the pendulums, with their wonted quickness, swung back and forth across the line of her flight.

Akulina got up again, and fetched her husband his boots. The boots were soiled and ripped; they had been made for a soldier. She took down from the stove a kaftan, and handed it to him without looking at him.

"Ilyitch, are n't you going to change your shirt?"

"Nay," said Polikeï.

Akulina did not look into his face once while he silently put on his boots and coat, and she did well not to look at him. Polikeï's face was pale, his lower jaw trembled, and into his eyes there came that expression of deep and submissive unhappiness, akin to tears,

peculiar to weak and kindly men who have fallen into sin. He brushed his hair, and was about to go. His wife kept him back, and arranged his shirt-band, which hung below his cloak, and straightened his cap.

"Say, Polikeï Ilyitch, what does the mistress want of you?" said the voice of the joiner's wife on the other side of the partition.

The joiner's wife had, that very morning, been engaged in a warm dispute with Akulina, in regard to a pot of lye which Polikeï's children had spilt; and, at the first moment, she was glad to hear that Polikeï was summoned to the mistress. It could not be for anything good. Moreover, she was a sharp, shrewd, and shrewish dame. No one understood better than she how to use her tongue; at least, so she herself thought.

"It must be that they are going to send you to the city to be a merchant," she continued. "I suppose they want to get a trusty man, and so will send you. You must sell me then some tea for a quarter, Polikeï Ilyitch."

Akulina restrained her tears, and her lips took on an expression of bitter anger. It showed she would have gladly wound her fingers in the untidy hair of that slattern, the joiner's wife; but when she glanced at her children, and thought that they might be left orphans, and she a soldier's widow, she forgot the shrewish joiner's wife, covered her face with her hands, sat down on the bed, and leaned her head on the pillow.

"Mamuska, you are squeesing me," cried the little girl who hissed her s's, and she pulled away her dress from under her mother's elbow.

"I wish you were all of you dead! You were born for misfortune," cried Akulina; and she filled the whole *corner* with her wailing, much to the delight of the joiner's wife, who had not yet forgotten about the pot of lye.

CHAPTER IV

A HALF-HOUR passed by. The baby began to cry. Akulina got up and nursed it. She was no longer weeping; but resting her thin but still pretty face on her hand, she fixed her eyes on the candle which was burnt almost out, and asked herself why she had got married, and why so many soldiers were needed, and, still more, how she might pay back the joiner's wife.

Her husband's steps were heard; she wiped away the traces of the tears, and got up to make way for him. Polikeĭ came in with an air of triumph, threw his hat on the bed, drew a long breath, and began to take off his belt.

"Well, what was it? why did she call you?"

"Hm! a good reason! Polikushka is the lowest of men; but, when there is something needed, who is called on? Polikushka!"

"What is it?"

Polikeĭ did not make haste to reply; he smoked his pipe, and kept spitting.

"She wants me to go to the merchant, and get her money."

"Get her money!" repeated Akulina.

Polikeĭ grinned and nodded.

"How well she knows how to talk! 'You've had,' says she, 'the reputation of being untrustworthy, but I have more faith in you than in any one else.'"— Polikeĭ raised his voice so that his neighbors might hear. —"'You promised me to reform,' says she, 'and here is the first proof that I believe in you: go,' says she, 'to the merchant, get some money for me, and bring it back.' And says I, 'My lady,' says I, 'we are all your slaves, and it's our duty to serve you as faithfully as we serve God, and so I feel that I can do everything for your well-being, because I owe it to you, and I could not refuse any service; so, whatever you order, that I will perform, because I be your slave.'"— He again smiled with that peculiar smile of a man who is weak, but

good-natured, and has been guilty of some sin. — "'And so,' says she, 'will you do this faithfully? Do you understand,' says she, 'that your fate depends upon this?' — 'How can I help comprehending that I can do it? People may slander me, and any one may fall into sin; but it would be a moral impossibility for me to do anything contrary to your interests, nor even think of it.' So, you see, I talked to her till my lady was just as soft as wax. 'You will be,' says she, 'my principal man.'" — He was quiet for a moment, and again the same smile played over his face. — "I know very well how to talk with her. When I used to go on leave of absence, I got practice in talking. Only let me talk with 'em, I make 'em just like silk."

"Much money?" asked Akulina.

"Fifteen hundred rubles," replied Polikeï, carelessly.

She shook her head.

"When do you go?"

"To-morrow, she said. 'Take a horse,' says she, 'any one you wish, come to the office, and God be with you.'"

"Glory to thee, O Lord!" exclaimed Akulina, getting up and crossing herself. "God be thy help, Ilyitch," she added, in a whisper, so as not to be heard beyond the partition, and holding him by the sleeve of his shirt. "Ilyitch, heed what I say: I will pray Christ the Lord that you go in safety. Kiss the cross, that you will not take a drop into your mouth."

"Why, of course I am not going to drink, when I have all that money with me!" he said, with a snort. "Some one was playing there on the piano, — handsomely, my!" he added, after a silence, breaking into a laugh. "It must have been the young lady. I was standing right before her, near the *shiffonere* — that is, before her ladyship; but the young lady was there behind the door, pounding away. She bangs and she bangs so harmonious.... like.... She just makes it sing, I tell you! I should like to play a little, that's a fact. I'd have liked to gone in just for once. I am just right for such things. To-morrow give me a clean shirt."

And they went to bed happy.

CHAPTER V

MEANTIME the office was buzzing with the voices of the muzhiks. It was no laughing matter. Almost all the muzhiks were at the meeting; and while Yegor Mikhaïlovitch was conferring with her ladyship, the men put on their hats, more voices began to be heard above the general conversation, and the voices became louder.

The murmur of many voices, occasionally interrupted by some eager, heated discourse, filled the air; and this murmur, like the sound of the roaring sea, came to the ears of the lady of the house, who felt at hearing it a nervous unrest analogous to the feeling excited by a heavy thunder-shower. It was neither terrible nor yet unpleasant to her. It seemed to her that the voices kept growing louder and more turbulent, and then some one person would make himself heard.

"Why should it be impossible to do everything gently, peaceably, without quarrel, without noise," she said, "according to the sweet law of Christianity and brotherly love?"

Many voices suddenly were heard together, but louder than all shouted Feodor Rezun, the carpenter. He was a man who had two grown sons, and he attacked the Dutlofs. The old man Dutlof spoke in his own defense; he came out in front of the crowd, behind which he had been standing, and spreading his arms wide and lifting up his beard, spoke so rapidly, in a choked voice, that it would have been hard for himself to know what he was saying. His children and nephews, fine young fellows, stood and pressed behind him; and the old man Dutlof reminded one of the one who is the *old hen* in the game of *Korshun*,[1] or "Hawk." Rezun was the hawk; and not Rezun alone, but all those who had two sons, and all the men with single sons, almost all the meeting, in fact, united against Dutlof.

The trouble lay in this: Dutlof's brother had been

[1] A game somewhat like "snap the whip." — ED.

sent as a soldier thirty years before; and therefore he did not wish to be considered as one of those who had three men in the family, but he desired his brother's service to be taken into account, and that he should be reckoned as one who had two grown assistants, and that the third recruit should be taken from that set.

There were four families, besides Dutlof's, that had three able-bodied men. But one was the village elder's, and his mistress had freed him from service. From another family, a recruit had been taken at the last conscription. From the other two families, two men had been already nominated, and one of them had not come to the meeting; but his wife stood, heavy at heart, in the very rear, anxiously hoping that somehow the wheel would turn in favor of her happiness. The other of the two nominees, the red-haired Roman, in a torn cloak (though he was not poor), stood leaning against the door-step, with downcast head; he said nothing all the while, but occasionally looked up attentively when any one spoke louder than usual, and then dropped his head again; and thus his unhappiness was expressed in his whole appearance.

The old man, Semyon Dutlof, was one to give the impression, even to those who knew him slightly, that he had laid up hundreds and thousands of rubles. He was dignified, God-fearing, substantial; he was, moreover, an elder of the Church. So much the more impressive was the indignation which now overmastered him.

Rezun the carpenter was, on the contrary, a tall, dark, dissipated man, quick to quarrel, and fond of speaking in meetings and in the market-place, with workmen, merchants, muzhiks, or gentlemen. Now he was calm and sarcastic, and with all the advantage of his stature, all the force of his loud voice, and his oratorical talent, was nagging the choking church-elder, who had been driven so entirely from the serene path of dignity.

There were still others who took part in the discussion: the round-faced, young-looking Garaska Kopuilof, stocky, with a four-square head, and curly beard; one of the speakers who imitated Rezun rather than the

younger generation, always distinguished for his bitter speech, and already a man of weight in the assembly; then Feodor Melnitchnui, a tall, yellow, gaunt, round-shouldered muzhik, also young, with the hair of his beard rather thin, and with small eyes; always prone to anger, sour-tempered, ready to see every one's bad side, and frequently embarrassing the meeting with his abrupt and unexpected questions and remarks. Both of these speakers were on Rezun's side. Moreover, two chatterers occasionally took part, — one who had a good-natured phiz, and a large and bushy red beard; his name was Khrapkof, and he was forever saying, "My dearly beloved friend"; and the other, Zhidkof, a small man, with a bird-like phiz, who was also in the habit of saying, "It follows, my brethren"; he kept turning to all sides, and his words were without rhyme or reason. Both of these two took now one side, now the other; but no one heeded what they said. There were others like them; but these two kept moving in and out in the crowd, shouted more than anybody else, disturbing the mistress, were listened to less than anybody else, and, being confused by the racket and shouting, found full satisfaction in talking nonsense.

There were many different characters in this group of peasants: some were morose, some courteous, some indifferent, some disputatious; there were also a few women behind the muzhiks, with sticks. But about all these I will tell some other time, as God shall permit.

The throng consisted, for the most part, however, of muzhiks, who behaved during the meeting as if it were church, and, standing in the rear, talked in a whisper about their domestic affairs, exchanging views, for instance, about the best time for beginning to cut their wood, or quietly hoped that they soon adjourn the meeting.

And then there were some well-to-do men, whose comfort the assembly could not benefit or curtail. To this number belonged Yermil, with his broad, shiny face, whom the muzhiks called "big-belly" because he was rich. To this number also belonged Starostin, on whose

face a self-satisfied expression of power was habitual: "Say whatever you please among yourselves, but no one will touch me. I have four sons, but you won't take any of them."

Occasionally, the opinionated young orators, like Kopuilof or Rezun, would have a fling even at them; and they would reply, but calmly and decidedly in the consciousness of their unassailable position.

However much Dutlof was like the old hen in the game of "Hawk," it could not be said that his lads were like the chickens. They did not hop about or scream, but stood calmly behind him. The oldest, Ignat, was now thirty years old; the second, Vasili, was already married, but was not available as a soldier; the third, Ilyushka, the nephew who had just been married, had a red and white complexion, and was dressed in an elegant sheepskin tulup — he was a driver[1] by profession; he stood gazing at the people, occasionally scratching the back of his head under the cap, as if the affair did not concern him at all, and yet he was the very one whom the "hawks" were trying to get away.

"Because my grandfather went as a soldier," some one was saying, "that's no reason why I should refuse the lot. Friends, it is no kind of a law at all. At the last conscription they took Mikheïchef, and his uncle had n't even got home at the time."

"Neither your father nor your uncle ever served the Tsar," said Dutlof, running his words together, "and you never served gentlemen nor the Commune; but you've always been a tippler, and your children take after you. It's impossible to live with you, and yet you point out other men. But for ten years I have been police-commissioner,[2] and I have been elder, and twice I have been burnt out, and no one ever helped me; and is it because we live peaceably at our place, ay, and honorably, that I am to be ruined? Give me back my brother. He died there, did n't he? Judge right, judge according to God's law, O orthodox Commune! and do not listen to the lies of that drunkard."

[1] *Yamshchik.* [2] *Sotsky*, centurion; an officer chosen by the Commune.

At this instant Gerasim said to Dutlof: —

"You refer to your brother. But he was not sent by the Commune, but the master sent him because of his good-for-nothing-ness; so he's no excuse for you."

Gerasim had no chance to say another word, for the tall, yellow Feodor Melnitchnui, leaning forward, began to speak in a gloomy tone: —

"Well, masters send whomever they please; then let the Commune make the best of it. The Commune tells your son to go; and, if you don't like it, ask the mistress; she has the right to command me or any of my children to wear the uniform. A fine law!" said he, bitterly; and, again waving his hand, took his former place.

The red-haired Roman, whose son had been drafted, lifted his head, and said, "That's so, that's so," and sat down morosely on the step.

But there were many other voices which also joined suddenly in the hubbub. Besides those who stood in the background and talked about their affairs, there were the babblers, who did not forget their duty.

"Certainly, O orthodox Commune," said the little Zhidkof, slightly varying Dutlof's words, "it is necessary to decide according to Christianity; according to Christianity, my brethren, it is necessary to decide."

"It is necessary to decide on our consciences, my dearly beloved friend," said the good-natured Khrapkof, slightly varying Kopuilof's words, and taking hold of Dutlof's sheepskin tulup; "it is according to the will of our lady, and not the decision of the Commune."

"Indeed, how is that?" exclaimed several.

"What's that drunken fellow barking about?" retorted Rezun. "Did you get me drunk, or was it your son whom they have found rolling round in the road, and does he dare to fling at me about drink? I tell you, brethren, we must act more wisely. If you want to let Dutlof off, though he is not of those who have two grown men, then name some one who has only one son; but he will laugh at us."

"Let Dutlof go. What's to be said?"

"Of course. We must cast lots for the men of large family [1] first," said several voices.

"Just as the mistress commands. Yegor Mikhaïluitch said she wanted to send one of the household servants," said some one's voice.

This observation somewhat calmed the quarrel, but it quickly broke out again, and personalities began to fly about.

Ignat, who, according to Rezun's remark, had been found drunk in the street, began to accuse Rezun of having stolen a saw of some passing carpenters, and of having beaten his wife almost to death during a drunken spree.

Rezun replied that he beat his wife when he was sober as well as when he was drunk, and very little anyway; and this made every one laugh. Referring to the saw, he suddenly lost his temper, and, pressing nearer to Ignat, began to question him:—

"Who was it stole the saw?"

"You did," replied the robustious Ignat, boldly advancing still nearer to him.

"Who stole it? Was n't it yourself?" screamed Rezun.

"No, you!" screamed Ignat.

After the saw, they disputed about the stealing of a horse, then of a bag of oats, then of some vegetables from the fields, then of some one's dead body. And such strange things both muzhiks said of each other, that if the hundredth part of their mutual charges had been true, it would have been incumbent on the authorities according to law to exile both of them instanter to Siberia at the least.

Old man Dutlof meantime sought another kind of protection. His son's outburst had not been pleasing to him; in order to restrain him, he said, "It 's a sin! it 's no use, I tell you." And he himself went to work to show that the men whose three sons lived under the same roof with their fathers should no more be liable than those whose sons lived on separate farms: and he referred to Starostin.

[1] *Troïniki:* a peasant family with *three* able-bodied men.

Starostin smiled slightly, gave a snort, and, stroking his beard after the manner of the well-to-do muzhik, replied that it was as it seemed fit to her ladyship; his son would go, of course, if she ordered him to go.

As regarded divided families, Gerasim also demolished Dutlof's arguments, remarking that it was far better not to allow families to live apart, as it had been in the time of the old barin; that "at the end of summer it is n't the time to get strawberries" (that is, it was too late to talk about it); that now it was n't the time to send those who were the sole protection of their families.

"Do we set up separate establishments just for the fun of it? Why should n't we get some advantage for it?" asked some of those who had left their fathers' houses; and the babblers took the same side.

"Well, hire a substitute if you don't like it. You can afford it," said Rezun to Dutlof.

Dutlof in despair buttoned up his kaftan, and turned to the other muzhiks.

"You seem to have counted up my money," he replied viciously. "Here comes Yegor Mikhaïluitch with word from the mistress."

CHAPTER VI

In fact, Yegor Mikhaïlovitch at this moment came in from the house. The peasants one after another removed their hats, and, as the overseer advanced, there were exposed one after another heads in various stages of baldness, and shocks of white, gray, black, red, or blond hair; and little by little, little by little, the voices were hushed, and finally there was perfect silence. The overseer stood on the stair, and made it evident that he had something to say.

Yegor Mikhaïlovitch, in his long frock coat, with his hands negligently thrust into his pockets, with his factory-made uniform cap pushed well forward, and standing firmly, with his legs set wide apart, on a height looking down on all these faces lifted and turned to

him, faces for the most part dignified with age, and for the most part handsome and full-bearded, had an entirely different mien from that which he wore in presence of his mistress. He was majestic.

"Well, boys, here's the mistress's message: she is not willing to let any of the household servants go, and whoever among you you may see fit to send will have to go. This time three are required. At present accounts the matter is five-sixths settled; now there's only half a choice left. But it makes no difference; if you don't decide to-day it will have to be decided later."

"Now's the time! let's have it settled," cried several voices.

"In my opinion," continued Yegor Mikhaïlovitch, "if Khoroshkin and Mitiukhin's Vaska go, it will be in accordance with the will of God."

"That's a fact, true enough," cried a number of voices.

"For the third we shall have to send either a Dutlof or from one of the families where there are two grown sons. What say you?"

"Dutlof, Dutlof," echoed the voices. "Dutlof has three."

And again, little by little, little by little, the din began, and again recriminations flew about in regard to vegetables taken from the fields and things stolen from the manor-house.

Yegor Mikhaïlovitch had been manager of the estate now for twenty years, and was a man of sense and experience. He stood in silence for a quarter of an hour and listened; then he suddenly commanded all to be silent, and bade Dutlof cast lots as to which of his family should go. They cast the lots into a cap, and when it had been well shaken Khrapkof drew from it. The lot fell to Ilyushkin. All were silent.

"So it's mine, is it? Let me see," said the nephew, in a broken voice.

All looked on in silence. Yegor Mikhaïlovitch commanded to bring on the next day the conscription money, seven kopeks for each peasant farm, and, explain-

ing that all the business was now at an end, adjourned the meeting. The crowd moved away, putting on their caps as they went around the house with a noise of voices and shuffling steps. The overseer stood on the door-step, gazing after the departing people. When the young Dutlofs had gone out of sight, he called the old man, who had remained behind, and the two went into the office.

"I am sorry for you, old man," said the overseer, sitting down in an arm-chair by the table. "It was your turn, though. Will you hire a substitute for your nephew, or not?"

The old man without replying looked earnestly at the overseer.

"You won't let him go?" queried the overseer, in reply to his look.

"We'd gladly buy him off, but haven't anything, Yegor Mikhaïluitch. Lost two horses this summer. I have just got my nephew married. You see, it's our luck, just because we've lived decently. Fine for him to talk as he did." (The old man referred to Rezun.)

The overseer rubbed his face with his hand and yawned. It was getting tiresome to him, and besides it was tea-time.

"Well, old man, don't be blue," said he; "but just dig in your cellar, and perhaps you can find enough to make up four hundred silver rubles. I can hire you a substitute, a great bargain! A few days ago a man offered himself."

"What! in the *government?*" asked Dutlof, meaning by "government" the chief city.

"Well, will you hire him?"

"I'd be glad to, but, before God, I...."

The overseer looked at him sternly.

"Now, you just listen to me, old man: don't let Ilyushka do any harm to himself; when I send to-night or to-morrow, have him come immediately. You bring him, and you shall be answerable for him; and if anything happens to him, God be my witness, I will take your oldest son. Do you hear?"

"But could n't they have taken some one else, Yegor Mikhaïluitch?" he said in an aggrieved tone, after a short silence; "because my brother died in the army, must they take his son also? Why should such luck come to me?" he added, almost weeping, and ready to get on his knees.

"Now, go along, go along!" said the overseer. "There 's no need of any trouble; it 's according to law. You look out for Ilyushka; you 're responsible for him."

Dutlof went home, carefully helping himself with his cane over the irregularities of the road.

CHAPTER VII

On the next day, early in the morning, there was drawn up before the door of the servants' wing[1] a traveling carriage, — the one which the overseer generally used, — drawn by a wide-tailed brown gelding called, for some inscrutable reason, Baraban, or the drum. At a safe distance from his head stood Aniutka, Polikeï's oldest daughter, barefoot, in spite of the rain and sleet and the cold wind, holding the bridle in one hand with evident terror, and with the other protecting her own head with a yellow-green jacket, which fulfilled in the family the functions of dress, shuba, head-dress, rug, overcoat for Polikeï, and many other functions.

In the *corner* a tumult was let loose. It was still dark. The morning light, ushering in a rainy day, was just beginning to show through the window, the broken panes of which were in places mended with pieces of paper.

Akulina, letting the breakfast wait on the stove and neglecting her children, the younger of whom were not yet up and were shivering with cold, as their covering had been taken from them for Aniutka's use, and in its place they had only their mother's kerchief for protection — Akulina was busily engaged in getting her hus-

[1] *Dvorovui "flügel"* (popularly miscalled *fliger*) from German *Flügel.*

band started on his journey. His shirt was clean. His boots, which, as the saying goes, were asking *for gruel*, caused her the greatest labor. In the first place, she took off her long woolen stockings, her only pair, and gave them to her spouse; next, out of a saddle-cloth which had been *lying round* in the stable, and Ilyitch had brought into the hut a few days before, she contrived to make some insoles and lining, so as to stop up the holes, and protect Ilyitch's feet from the dampness.

Ilyitch himself, sitting with his feet on the bed, was busy in turning his belt so that it might not have the appearance of a dirty rope. The cross little girl who hissed her s's, wearing a sheepskin, which not only covered her head, but protected her legs, had been sent to Nikita to borrow a cap.

The hubbub was increased by the household servants, who came to ask Ilyitch to do errands for them in the city: to buy a needle for one woman, tea for another, olive-oil for another; tobacco for this muzhik, and sugar for the joiner's wife, who had already made haste to set up her samovar, and in order to bribe Ilyitch had brought him a cup of concoction which she called tea.

Although Nikita refused to lend his cap, and he was obliged to put his own in order, that is to say, to fasten on the shreds of wool that were falling off or hanging by a thread, and to sew up the holes with his veterinary needle; though he could not at first get on his boots with the felt insoles made out of the saddle-cloth; though Aniutka had got so chilled that she let Baraban go, and Mashka, in her sheepskin shuba, went in her place; and then Mashka had to take off the shuba, and Akulina herself went to hold Baraban, — still at last Ilyitch managed to get dressed, making use of all the clothing that appertained to his family, and leaving only the one jacket and some dirty rags, and now, in spick and span order, took his seat in the telyega, bundled himself up, arranged the hay, once more bundled himself up, picked up the reins, bundled himself up still more warmly, just as is done by very dignified people, and drove off.

His small boy Mishka, rushing down the steps, asked to be taken on. The sibilating Mashka kept asking for "a *l*ide," and would be "warm enough, even if she had n't any seepskin;"[1] and Polikeï reined in the horse, smiled his ineffectual smile, and Akulina helped the children to get in, and bending close, whispered to him to remember his promise, and not drink anything on the road. Polikeï carried the children as far as the blacksmith-shop, helped them out, again tucked himself in, again settled his cap, and drove off alone in a slow, dignified trot, his cheeks shaking, and his feet thumping on the floor of the wagon as he bounced over the rough road.

Mashka and Mishka, both barefooted, flew home down the little hill with such fleetness, and with such a noise, that a dog running from the village to the manor gazed after them, and, suddenly putting his tail between his legs, fled home yelping, so that the noise made by Polikeï's youngsters was multiplied tenfold.

The weather was wretched, the wind was cutting; and a mixture of snow, rain, and hail kept lashing Polikeï's face, and his bare hands which he thrust out from the sleeve of his cloak in order to hold the icy reins; and it rattled on the leather cover of the horse-collar, and on the head of old Baraban, who laid back his ears and blinked his eyes.

Then suddenly it ceased, and lighted up for an instant; the form of the dark purple snow-clouds became clearly visible; and the sun prepared to glance forth, as it were, but irresolutely and gloomily, like Polikeï's own smile.

Nevertheless, Polikeï Ilyitch was absorbed in pleasant thoughts. He, — a man whom they thought of exiling, whom they threatened with the conscription, whom no one except the lazy spared either abuse or blows, whom they always saddled with the most unpleasant jobs, — he was now going to collect a *sum o'* money, and a big sum; and his mistress had confidence in him; and he was driving in the overseer's wagon with

[1] She says *suba* for *shuba*, *plokatili* for *prokatili*.

Baraban, which his mistress herself had driven; and he was driving like some rich householder, with leather tugs and reins. And Polikeï sat straighter than ever, smoothed the wool on his cap, and once more bundled himself up.

However, if Polikeï thought that he was like a rich householder, he was greatly mistaken. To be sure every one knows that merchants who do a business of ten thousand rubles ride in carriages with leather harness. But, after all, there 's a difference. There comes a man with a beard, in a blue or, it may be, a black kaftan, sitting alone in the wagon behind a plump steed; as soon as you look at him and see whether his horse is plump, whether he himself is plump, how he sits, how his horse is harnessed, how the carriage shines, how he himself is girdled, you know instantly whether he is a muzhik, who makes a thousand or a hundred rubles' worth of sales.

Every experienced man, as soon as he looked closely at Polikeï, at his hands, at his face, at his short neglected beard, at his girdle, at the hay spread carelessly over the box, at the lean Baraban, at the worn tires, would have known instantly that the rig was driven by a serf, and not by a merchant, or a drover, or a householder with a thousand or a hundred or even ten rubles.

But Ilyitch did not realize this; he deceived himself, and deceived himself pleasantly. Fifteen hundred rubles he will carry in his bosom! It comes into his mind that he might drive Baraban to *Odesta* instead of home, and then go where God might give. But he will not do that, but will certainly carry the money to his mistress, and it will be said that no amount of money tempted him.

As he came near a tavern, Baraban began to tug on the left rein, to slacken his pace, and to turn in; but Polikeï, in spite of the fact that he had money in his pocket given him for various commissions, cut Baraban with the knout, and drove by. The same thing took place at the next tavern; and at noon he dismounted from the telyega, and opening the gate of the merchant's house, where the people from the estate always

put up, drove the team in, unharnessed the horse, and gave him some hay, and ate his own dinner with the merchant's hired help, not failing to make it known on what important errand he had come; and then, with his letter in his cap, betook himself to the gardener.

The gardener, who knew Polikeï, read the letter, and found it evidently difficult to believe that he was really to deliver the money to the bearer. Polikeï did his best to be offended, but was not able to accomplish it; he only smiled his peculiar smile. The gardener re-read the letter, and delivered the money. Polikeï took the money and placed it in his bosom, and went back to his lodgings. Not a beer-saloon, not a tavern, nothing seduced him. He experienced a pleasant exhilaration in all his being; and not once did he loiter at the shops where all sorts of tempting wares were displayed, — boots, cloaks, caps, dresses, things to eat and drink. As he walked along slowly, he had the pleasant consciousness: "I could buy all these things, but I am not going to."

He went to the bazaar to execute his commissions, made them into a bundle, and then tried to beat down the price of a tanned sheepskin shuba, for which twenty-five rubles was asked. The vender, looking critically at Polikeï, did not believe that he had the money to buy it with; but Polikeï pointed to his breast, saying that he had enough to buy out his whole establishment if he wanted. He asked to try it on, pulled on it, crumpled it, blew the fur, kept it on long enough to smell of it, and at last took it off with a sigh.

"Unconscionable price! If you would only let it go for fifteen rubles," he said.

The dealer angrily pulled the garment over the counter, but Polikeï went out with a gay heart, and directed his steps to his lodgings. After eating his supper, and giving Baraban his water and oats, he climbed up on the stove, took out the envelop, and gazed at it long, and asked the educated dvornik to read the address to him, and the words, "with an enclosure of sixteen hundred and seventy paper rubles."

The envelop was made of ordinary paper; the seals were of dark brown wax with the impression of an anchor; one large seal in the center, four on the edge. On one side, a drop of wax had fallen. Ilyitch looked at all this, and fixed it in his memory, and even moved the sharp ends of the notes. He experienced a certain childish satisfaction in knowing that he held so much money in his hands. He put the envelop in the lining of his cap, put the cap under his head, and lay down; but several times during the night he woke up, and felt after the money. And every time, finding the envelop in its place, he experienced the same pleasurable feeling in the consciousness that he, Polikeï, the proscribed and ridiculed, was carrying so much money, and was going to deliver it faithfully, — as faithfully as the overseer himself.

CHAPTER VIII

About midnight the merchant's people, and Polikeï as well, were aroused by a knocking at the gate and the shouting of muzhiks. It was the contingent of recruits, whom they were bringing in from Pokrovskoye. There were ten men in all: Khoriushkin, Mitiushkin, and Ilya, Dutlof's nephew, two substitutes, the *starosta*, or elder, the old man Dutlof, and three drivers. The night-lamp was burning in the house, and the cook was asleep on the bench under the holy images. She sprang up, and began to light the lamps. Polikeï also woke up, and, bending down from the stove, tried to see who the muzhiks were.

They all came in, crossed themselves, and sat down on the bench. They were all extremely quiet, so that it was impossible to make out who belonged to the detachment. They greeted one another, chatted together, and asked for something to eat. To be sure, some were silent and glum; on the other hand, others were extraordinarily gay, and apparently the worse for liquor. In this number was Ilya, who had never been drunk before.

"Well, boys, are you going to have something to eat, or are you going to bed?" asked the village elder.

"Have something to eat," replied Ilya, throwing back his sheepskin, and sprawling out on the bench. "Send for some vodka."

"You've had enough vodka!" rejoined the elder, shortly, and turned to the others.... "Better lunch on some bread, boys; what's the use of waking people up!"

"Give us some vodka," repeated Ilya, not looking at any one, and in a tone of voice which made it evident that he was not going to be put off.

The muzhiks listened to the elder's advice, brought from the cart a great loaf of bread, ate it up, asked for kvas,[1] and lay down to sleep, some on the floor, some on the stove.

Ilya kept saying occasionally, "Give me vodka, I say, give me vodka." Suddenly he caught sight of Polikeï. "Ilyitch — there's Ilyitch! you here, dear old fellow! Here I am going as a soldier; said good-by to my matushka, and my wife.... how bad she felt! They made me a soldier.... Set up some vodka!"

"No money," said Polikeï. "However, it's as God gives; maybe they'll find you disqualified," he added, in a comforting tone.

"No, brother, I have always been as sound as a birch, never sick a day in my life, how could they find me disqualified? How many soldiers more does the Tsar need?"

Polikeï began to relate a story of how a muzhik gave a bribe to a *dokhtor*, and so escaped.

Ilya came up to the stove, and continued the conversation.

"No, Ilyitch, now it's done, and I myself don't want to get off. My uncle himself sent me off. Wouldn't they have bought themselves off? No, he grudged his son, and he grudged his money; and they sent me instead.... And now I don't want to get off." — He spoke quietly, confidentially, under the influence of deep dejection. — "However, I'm sorry for the matushka. And

[1] A sort of beer made of rye-bread soaked in water and fermented.

how the sweetheart took on! Yes, and my wife — that's the way they kill the women. Now it's all over; I am a soldier. Better not to have got married. Why did they make me marry? To-morrow we go."

"Why did they take you away with short notice?" asked Polikeï. "Nothing had been said about it, and then suddenly...."

"You see, they were afraid I should do something to myself," replied Ilyushka, smiling. "I would n't have done anything, of course. I shan't be ruined by going as a soldier; but I 'm sorry for the old woman. Why did they make me marry?" he repeated, in a soft and melancholy tone.

The door opened, squeaking loudly, and the old man Dutlof, shaking the wet from his hat, came into the room in his huge sabots, which fitted his feet almost like canoes.

"Afanasi," said he, crossing himself, and addressing the dvornik, "can I have a lantern while I give the horses their oats?"

Dutlof did not look at his nephew, but quietly busied himself with making a candle-end burn. His mittens and whip were thrust into his belt, and his cloak was closely buttoned; he had just come with the baggage. His toil-worn face was, as ordinarily, calm, peaceful, and occupied with his labors.

Ilya, when he saw his uncle, stopped talking, again turned his eyes gloomily toward the bench, and then, addressing the starosta, said: —

"Give me some vodka, Yermila; I want something to drink."

His voice was angry and stern.

"This is no time for wine now," replied the starosta, sipping from a cup of kvas. "Don't you see the folks have eaten their supper and gone to bed? What do you want to make a disturbance for?"

The words "make a disturbance" apparently suggested to him the idea of making a disturbance.

"Starosta, I'll do some harm, if you don't give me some vodka."

"You 'd better bring him to reason," said the starosta

to Dutlof, who had now lighted the lantern, but stood listening to what was coming, and looking askance with deep commiseration at his nephew, as if wondering at his childishness.

Ilya, looking moodily down, repeated his threat: —

"Give me wine, or I'll do myself some harm."

"Don't, Ilya," said the starosta, gently, "please don't. It's better not."

But these words had scarcely passed his lips ere Ilya leaped up, smashed a window-pane with his fist, and screamed with all his might.

"You won't listen, here's for you," and darted for the other window to smash that also.

Polikeï, in the twinkling of an eye, rolled over twice, and hid himself in an angle of the stove, raising a panic among all the cockroaches. The starosta threw aside his spoon, and hastened after Ilya. Dutlof slowly put down the lantern, took off his girdle, clucking with his tongue, shook his head, and went to Ilya, who was already struggling with the starosta and the dvornik, who were trying to keep him from the window. They had his hands behind his back, and apparently held him firmly; but as soon as he saw his uncle with the belt in his hand, his strength was multiplied tenfold. He tore himself away, and, rolling his eyes in frenzy, flung himself upon Dutlof with doubled fist.

"I'll kill you; don't you come near me, you barbarian! You have ruined me, you and your sons, murderers. You have ruined me! Why did you make me marry? Don't you dare come near me, ... I will kill you!"

Ilyushka was frantic. His face was purple, his eyes were wild, his whole healthy young body trembled as in an ague. It seemed as if he could and would kill all three of the muzhiks who were trying to subdue him.

"You will shed your kinsman's blood, you bloodsucker!"

Something passed over Dutlof's ever calm face. He made a step forward.

"He means harm," he said suddenly; and then,

gathering his energy, he threw himself with a quick motion on his nephew, rolled over with him on the floor, and, with the help of the starosta, began to bind his arms. For five minutes they struggled violently. At last Dutlof, with the aid of the muzhiks, got up, tearing Ilya's hands from his sheepskin, in which they were convulsively clutched, got up himself, and then carried the young man, with his hands fastened behind his back, to a bench in one corner of the room.

"I said it would be worse," he remarked, getting his breath after the struggle, and adjusting his shirt-band. "Why should he sin? We must all die. Let him have a cloak for a pillow," he added, addressing the dvornik, "or the blood will run to his head;" and, after girding himself with a rope, he took his lantern, and went out to his horses.

Ilya, with disheveled locks, pale face, and torn shirt, glared about the room as if he were trying to remember where he was. The dvornik picked up the broken glass, and put a jacket in the window so as to keep out the cold. The elder again sat down with his cup of kvas.

"Ekh, Ilyukha, Ilyukha, I'm sorry for you, indeed I am. What's to be done? Here's Khoriushkin, he's married, too. No way of avoiding it."

"I'm ruined through my uncle, the villain," reiterated Ilya, with tearless wrath. "Much he pities his own!.... Matushka said the overseer told him to hire a substitute. He would n't do it. He says he would n't borrow. Have I and my brother brought nothing into the house?.... He is a villain!"

Dutlof came into the house, said a prayer before the holy images, took off his coat and hat, and sat down by the elder. The maid brought him also some kvas and a spoon. Ilya said nothing, but, shutting his eyes, lay still on the cloak. The starosta silently pointed to him, and shook his head. Dutlof waved his hand.

"Am I not sorry to have him go? He's my own brother's son. And though I pity him so, they make it out that I've done him some harm. His wife[1] put it

[1] *Khozyaïka.*

into his head; a crafty woman, but quite too young. The idea of her thinking that we had money enough to hire a substitute! And so she blamed me. And yet I'm sorry for the young fellow."

"Okh, he's a fine young fellow," said the starosta.

"With my little means I couldn't do anything for him. To-morrow I am going to send Ignat in, and his wife will want to go."

"Send her along, first-rate," said the starosta, and he got up and mounted the stove. "What's money? Money's dust."

"Who would begrudge money if he had it?" asked one of the merchant's people, lifting his head.

"Ekh! money, money! it causes many a sin," replied Dutlof. "Nothing in the world causes so much sin as money, and it says so in the Scriptures."

"It says everything," said the dvornik. "A man told me the other day, there was a merchant, he had made a lot of money, and he did not want any of it to remain behind him. He loved his money so that he took it with him into his tomb. He came to die, and ordered every kopek that he had to be put into a pillow in the grave with him. And so they did. By and by his sons began to seek for his money. None anywhere. One of them suspected that the money was in the pillow. They go to the Tsar, and get permission to dig it up. And what do you think? There was nothing in the pillow, not a thing! but the grave was full of mold and worms; and so they fill it up again. That is what money did!"

"Truly, much sin!" said Dutlof, and, standing up, he began to say his prayers.

After he had prayed, he looked at his nephew. He was asleep. Dutlof went to him, took off his belt, and then lay down. Another muzhik went out to sleep with the horses.

CHAPTER IX

As soon as all was quiet, Polikeï, like one engaged in some guilty deed, quietly slipped down from the stove, and began to make ready to depart. It somehow seemed to him a trying task to spend the night here with the recruits. The cocks were already calling to one another, more and more frequently.

Baraban had eaten all his oats, and was stretching his head toward the watering-trough. Polikeï harnessed him, and led him out past the carts of the muzhiks. His cap with its contents was safe, and his carriage-wheels were soon rolling anew over the frosty Pokrovski road. Polikeï began to breathe more easily as soon as he got out of the city. And yet, till then, somehow, it seemed to him all the time as if he heard some one behind him, pursuing him; he imagined himself stopped; that he, instead of Ilya, had his hands bound behind his back, and that to-morrow he would have to go to camp.

Either from the cold or from terror, a chill struck down his back, and he urged and urged Baraban to his utmost endeavor. The first person he met was a priest in a high winter cap, walking with a one-eyed workman. Polikeï grew even more worried. But as he left the city behind, this terror gradually diminished. Baraban proceeded in a slow walk. It grew lighter, so that it was possible to see the road before him. Ilyitch took off his cap and felt after the money.

"Shall I put it in my bosom?" he queried. "I should have to undo my girdle. Now I 'll have a bite of luncheon at the foot of the hill. I 'll get out of the telyega when I get there. I 'll be careful. My cap is sewed up on top, and nothing can slip out from under the lining, and I won't take it off till I get home."

But Baraban, having run down the hill in his peculiar manner, dashed up the slope on the other side; and Polikeï, who, like the horse, felt a strong desire to get home, did not hinder him.

Everything was in order, or, at least, seemed to him

so; and he allowed himself to picture his mistress's delight, and the five-ruble silver piece she would give him, and the joy of his family.

He took off his cap, once more felt of the letter, crushed his cap down closer to his head, and smiled. The woolen stuff of which his cap was made was rotten; and just because Akulina, the day before, had carefully sewed the torn place, he tore the other side; and precisely the motion by which Polikeï, in taking off his cap in the dark, thought he was pulling down the envelop with the money closer under the wool, — that same motion tore the cap, and gave the envelop a chance to escape from one corner.

It began to grow light, and Polikeï, who had not slept all night, grew drowsy. Adjusting his cap again, and still more loosening the envelop, Polikeï leaned his head on the side of the wagon, and drowsed.

He woke up just as he reached home. His first impulse was to feel for his cap; it was firm on his head. He did not take it off, being convinced that the envelop was there. He whipped up Baraban, adjusted the hay, again assumed the dignity of a householder, and, looking around him with an air of importance, rattled up toward the house.

There was the cook-house, there the "wing," there the joiner's wife hanging out her wash, there the office; there the manor-house, where, in a moment, Polikeï would give proof that he was a faithful and honest man, "for any man may be slandered," and the mistress would say, "Well, thank you, Polikeï, here's three — or maybe five, or maybe even ten — silver rubles for you;" and would have some tea brought to him, and perhaps some spirits besides. It would not come amiss after the chilly ride. "And with the ten rubles we'll have a holiday, and buy some boots, and pay back Nikita the four rubles and a half, since he's begun to dun me for them."

When he was within two hundred steps of the house, Polikeï straightened himself up, tightened his belt, adjusted his collar, took off his cap, smoothed his hair,

and with all deliberation thrust his hand under the lining. His hand moved more and more nervously; he inserted the other also. His face grew paler and paler. One hand came out on the other side. ....

Polikeï fell on his knees, stopped the horse, and began to search all over the telyega, the hay, the bundle of purchases, to feel in his bosom, in his overalls. The money was nowhere to be found.

"Mercy on me![1] What does this mean? What will be done to me?" he roared, tearing his hair.

But just then, remembering that he might be seen, he turned Baraban around, put on his cap, and drove the astonished and reluctant animal up the road again.

"I can't bear to have Polikeï drive me," Baraban must have said to himself. "Once in my life he fed me and watered me in time, and just for the sake of deceiving me in the most unpleasant manner. How I put myself out to get home! He stopped me, and just as I smelled our hay, he drives me back again."

"You devilish good-for-nothing beast!" cried Polikeï through his tears, standing up in the telyega, and sawing on Baraban's mouth with the reins, and plying the whip.

CHAPTER X

That whole day no one at Pokrovskoye saw Polikeï. The mistress several times after dinner made inquiries, and Aksiutka flew down to Akulina: but Akulina said that he had not come; that the merchant must have detained him, or something had happened to the horse. "May it not have gone lame?" she suggested. "The last time Maksim was gone four and twenty hours, — walked the whole way." And Aksiutka's pendulums brought back the message to the house; and Akulina thought over all the reasons for her husband's delay, and tried hard to calm her fears, but she did not succeed. Her heart was heavy, and her preparations for the next day's festival made little progress in her hands.

[1] *Batiushki.*

She tormented herself all the more because the joiner's wife was convinced that she had seen him.

"A man just like Ilyitch drove up the preshpect, and then turned back again."

The children also waited restlessly and impatiently for their papa; but for other reasons. Aniutka and Mashka were without any sheepskin or cloak; and so they were deprived of the possibility of taking turns in going into the street, and were therefore obliged to content themselves in their single garments, and to make circuits around the house with strenuous swiftness so as to be troubled as little as possible by the inhabitants of the *wing* coming and going. Once Mashka tripped over the feet of the joiner's wife, who was lugging water; and though she cried lustily from the knock that she received on her knee, yet the woman pulled her hair violently, and she began to cry still more grievously. When she did not meet any one, she flew straight into the door, and mounted the stove by means of the tub.

The mistress and Akulina began to be really worried about Polikeï himself; the children, about what he wore. But Yegor Mikhaïlovitch, in reply to her ladyship's question, "Has n't Polikeï come yet, and where can he be?" smiled, and said, "I cannot tell;" and it was evident that he was satisfied to have his presupposition confirmed. "He would have to come to dinner," he said significantly.

All that day no one at Pokrovskoye had any tidings of Polikeï; only afterward it was learned that some neighboring muzhiks had seen him running along the road without his cap, and asking every one "if they found a letter."

Another man had seen him asleep by the side of the road, near a horse hitched into a telyega. "I thought he was drunk," said this man, "and that the horse had not been fed or watered for a couple of days, its belly was so drawn up."

Akulina did not sleep all night, but sat up waiting for him; but not even in the night did he arrive. If she had lived alone, and if she had had a cook and second

girl, she would have been still more unhappy; but as soon as the cocks began to crow for the third time, and the joiner's wife got up, Akulina was obliged to rise and betake herself to the stove. It was a holiday; so it was necessary before daylight to take out her bread, to make kvas, to bake cakes, to milk the cow, to iron the dresses and shirts, to wash the children, to bring water, and keep her neighbor from occupying the whole oven.

Akulina ceased not to keep her ears open while she was fulfilling these duties. It was already broad daylight; already the bells had begun to peal, already the children were up, but still no Polikeï. The day before it was real winter, the snow unevenly covered the fields, roads, and roofs; but to-day, as if in honor of the festival, it was clear, sunny, and cool, so that one could see and hear a long distance.

But Akulina, standing by the oven, and with her head thrust into the door, was so occupied in watching the baking of her cakes, that she did not hear Polikeï as he came in, and only by the cries of the children did she know that her husband had come. Aniutka, as the eldest, had oiled her hair and dressed herself. She had on a new pink calico dress, somewhat rumpled, the gift of the gracious lady, and it fitted her like the bark on a tree, and dazzled the neighbors' eyes; her hair was shiny, having been rubbed with a candle-end; her shoes were not exactly new, but were elegant.

Mashka was still in her jacket and covered with dust, so Aniutka would not let her come near to her for fear she should soil her clean things. Mashka was in the yard when her father came along with a bag.

"Papa's come!" she cried, and darted head-first into the door past Aniutka, whom she sadly soiled. Aniutka, no longer afraid of getting soiled, immediately struck Mashka. Akulina could not leave her work, and had to shout to the children, "There now, stop! I'll give you both a good thrashing!" and she glanced toward the door. Ilyitch, with his sack in his hand, came through the entry, and instantly hurried into his "corner." It seemed to Akulina that he was pale, and that his face

had an expression as if he was either weeping or smiling; she could not make out which.

"Well, Ilyitch," she asked, not leaving the oven, "what luck?"

Ilyitch muttered something which she did not hear.

"How?" she screamed; "have you been to our lady's?"

Ilyitch sat down on the bed, looked wildly around, and smiled his guilty and deeply unhappy smile. For a long time he said nothing.

"Well, Ilyitch? why so long?" rang Akulina's voice.

"I, Akulina, ... I gave the money to our lady; how thankful she was!" said he, suddenly, and looked around even more restlessly than ever, still smiling. Two objects especially attracted his restless, feverishly staring eyes, — the rope fastened to the cradle, and the baby. He went to the cradle, and with his slender fingers began rapidly to untie a knot in the rope. Then his eyes rested on the babe; but just then Akulina, with the cakes on a platter, came into the "corner." Ilyitch quickly hid the rope in his bosom, and sat down on the bed.

"What's the matter, Ilyitch? You don't seem like yourself," said Akulina.

"I have n't had any sleep," was his reply.

Suddenly something flashed by the window; and in an instant Aksiutka, the maid from the upper house, darted into the room.

"The gracious lady[1] commands Polikeĭ Ilyitch to come to her this minute," said she. "Avdot'ya Mikolavna commands you to come this minute .... this minute."

Polikeĭ gazed at Akulina, at the little girl.

"Instantly! what more is wanted?" he asked so simply that Akulina's apprehensions were quieted; maybe he is going to be rewarded. "Say I will come instantly."

He got up and went out.

Akulina took a trough, placed it on the bench, poured in water from the buckets which stood by the door, filled it up with boiling water from the kettle on the

[1] *Baruinya;* she calls her Mikolavna instead of Nikolayevna.

oven, began to roll up her sleeves and try the temperature of the water.

"Come, Mashka, I want to wash you."

The cross sibilating little girl began to cry.

"Come, you scabby wench! I want to put a clean shirt on you. Now, make up faces, will you? Come, I've got to wash your sister besides."

Polikeï meantime was not following the maid from the "upper" house, but was going in an exactly opposite direction. In the entry next the wall was a straight staircase leading to the loft. When Polikeï reached the entry he looked around, and, seeing no one, he bent down, and, almost running, climbed up this staircase quickly and with agility.

"What in the world does it mean that Polikeï does n't come?" asked the lady, impatiently, turning to Dunyasha, who was combing her hair. "Where is Polikeï? Why does n't he come?"

Aksiutka again flew down to the servants' wing, and again flew into the entry, and summoned Ilyitch to the mistress.

"But he went long ago," said Akulina, who, having washed Mashka, was at this time in the act of putting her contumacious little nursling into the trough, and silently, in spite of his cries, was washing his red head. The boy screamed, wrinkled up his face, and tried to clutch something with his helpless hands. Akulina with one big hand supported his weak, soft little back, all dimples, and with the other was soaping it.

"See if he is n't asleep somewhere," she said, glancing around nervously.

The joiner's wife at this time, with her hair unkempt, with her bosom open, and holding up her dress, was climbing up to the loft to get a garment which was drying there.

Suddenly a cry of horror was heard from the loft, and the joiner's wife, like one crazy, with wide-open eyes, came down on her hands and feet backwards, quicker than a cat, and fled from the stairs.

"Ilyitch," she cried.

Akulina dropped the child which she was holding.

"He has hung himself!" roared the joiner's wife.

Akulina — not noticing that the child, like a ball, rolled over and over on his face, and, kicking his little legs, fell head first into the water — ran to the entry.

"From the beam — he is hanging," repeated the joiner's wife, but stopped when she saw Akulina.

Akulina flew to the stairs, and, before any one could prevent her, climbed up; and with a terrible cry fell back like a dead body on the steps, and she would have been killed if the people hurrying from all directions had not been in time to seize her.

CHAPTER XI

For some minutes it was impossible to bring any order out of the general chaos. The people ran about in crowds, all were screaming, all were talking; children and old people were weeping. Akulina lay in a dead faint. At last some men, the joiner, and the overseer, who came running, mounted the stairs; and the joiner's wife for the twentieth time told her story: —

"Without any thought of anything, I was going to get her cape, and I looked in this way and I see a man; I look more close; there's a cap lying on one side. I see his legs twitching. Then a cold chill ran down my back. At last I make out a man hanging there, and .... that I should have to see that! How ever I got down is more than I can tell. And it is a miracle that God saved me. Truly the Lord had mercy. It was so steep, and .... such a height! I might have got my death."

The men who went into the loft told the same story. Ilyitch was hanging from the beam, in his shirt and stockings alone, with the very rope that he had taken off from the cradle. His cap, which had fallen off, lay beside him. He had taken off his jacket and sheepskin shuba, and folded them neatly. His feet just touched the floor, and there was not a sign of life.

Akulina came to herself, and tried to climb to the loft again; but they would not let her.

"Mamma,[1] little brother has fallen into the water," suddenly screamed the sibilating girl from the "corner." Akulina tore herself away, and darted back to her room. The babe, not stirring, lay head downwards in the tub, and his legs were motionless. Akulina seized him, but the child did not breathe or stir. Akulina threw him on the bed, put her arms akimbo, and burst into a fit of laughter so loud, discordant, and terrible, that Mashka, who at first began to laugh too, put her fingers in her ears, and ran weeping into the entry.

The people also poured into the "corner," and filled it with their lamentations. They picked up the child, and tried to bring him to; but it was all in vain. Akulina jumped about on the bed, and laughed and laughed so that it was terrible even to hear it.

And now to see this heterogeneous throng of men and women, of old men and children, pressing into the entry, one could get some idea of the number of people who lived in the servants' quarters.[2] All were running about this way and that, all talking at once; many were weeping, and no one did anything useful.

The joiner's wife kept finding newcomers who had not heard her story; and again and again she repeated how her deepest feelings had been stirred up by the unexpected sight, and how God had saved her from falling down the stairs.

The old butler, in a woman's jacket, told how a woman in the time of the late barin had been drowned in the pond.

The overseer sent messengers after the police inspector[3] and a priest, and stationed a guard.

The maid-servant Aksiutka, her eyes red with weeping, peeped through a hole in the loft; and though she

[1] *Mamushka;* she calls the child by its name Semka, diminutive of Semyon.

[2] *Fliger*, peasant corruption of *flügel*, the wing; the collection of izbas occupied by the *dvorovuiye liudi*, or domestic servants.

[3] *Stanovoï*.

could not see anything there, yet she could not tear herself away and go to her mistress.

Agafya Mikhaïlovna, who had been the old dowager's lady's-maid, made some tea to calm her nerves, and wept. Experienced, plump Dame[1] Anna, with her hands smeared with olive-oil, was laying out on the table the dead body of the little babe.

The women stood around Akulina, and looked at her in silence. The children who lived in the "corners" looked at the mother, and began to cry, then choked down their sobs, and then again, looking at her, began to weep louder than ever. The boys and men collected around the steps, and with terror-stricken faces peered into the door and into the windows, unable to see anything, and not understanding it all, and asking one another what had happened.

One said that the joiner had cut his wife's leg off with an ax. Another said that the laundress had had triplets. A third said that the cook's cat had had a fit and bitten the people.

But the truth gradually became generally known, and at last reached the mistress's ears. And it seems that they had n't the wit to break the news gently to her; the rough Yegor told her without any warning, and so shattered her nerves that for a long time afterward she could not get over it.

The crowd had now begun to grow calmer. The joiner's wife set up her samovar, and made some warm tea; and so those from outside, not receiving an invitation, took the hint that it was not polite for them to stay any longer. The boys began to tear themselves away from the steps. All now knew what the trouble was, and crossing themselves, were beginning to scatter in different directions, when suddenly the cry was raised, "Baruinya, baruinya!"[2] and all came rushing back again, and crowding together so as to give her

[1] *Babushka*, grandmother, augmentation of *baba*, a peasant woman.

[2] "The mistress, the mistress," or, "the gracious lady." *Barin* and *baruinya* are the terms used by the domestics for the master and mistress.

room to pass. Nevertheless, all wanted to see what the lady would do.

The mistress of the estate, pale and with tears in her eyes, passed through the entry, and crossed the threshold into Akulina's "corner." Dozens of heads crowded together and peered through the door. They pressed so violently against one woman who was heavy with child, that she screamed, but nevertheless, taking advantage of the situation, this same woman managed to get the foremost place. And how could they help wishing to see the mistress in Akulina's "corner"! For the domestics it was much the same as a Bengal fire at the end of an exhibition. Of course it's a fine thing to burn the Bengal fire; and of course it was a fine thing when the mistress, in her silk and laces, went into Akulina's "corner." The lady went up to Akulina, and took her by the hand. But Akulina snatched it away. The old domestics shook their heads disapprovingly.

"Akulina," said the lady, "for your children's sake calm yourself."

Akulina gave a loud laugh and drew herself up.

"My children are solid silver, solid silver! I don't deal in paper notes," she muttered rapidly. "I told Ilyitch, 'Don't keep the bank-notes,' and now they've smeared him with tar, smeared him .... with tar and soap, lady. So if he's got the barn-itch, it'll cure him right away;" and again she went into a fit of laughter, louder than before.

The mistress turned around, and asked for the doctor's boy and some mustard. "Give me some cold water," and she herself began to look about for water. But when she saw the dead baby, and Dame Anna standing by him, the mistress turned away, and all saw she covered her face with a handkerchief and wept. But Dame Anna — it was a pity that the mistress did not see it; she would have appreciated it, and it was all done for her special benefit too — covered the child with a piece of linen, folded the little arms with her soft, skilful hands, and arranged the little head, composed the lips, and feelingly closed the eyes, and sighed, so that

every one could see what a kind heart she had. But the mistress did not see it, — indeed, she could not see anything at all. She began to sob, and, when the first attack of hysterics was over, they led her out into the entry, and they led her home.

"That's all she could do," was what many thought, and they began to separate. Akulina was still laughing, and talking nonsense. They led her into another room, cupped her, put on mustard-plasters, applied ice to her forehead; but all the time she did not understand it in the least, did not weep, but laughed, and said and did such things that the kind people who were waiting on her could not restrain themselves, but even laughed.

CHAPTER XII

The festival was not gay at Pokrovskoye. Notwithstanding the fact that the day was beautiful, the people did not go out to enjoy themselves; the girls did not collect to sing songs; the factory-boys that came out from the city did not play the harmonica or on the balalaĭka;[1] they did not jest with the girls. All sat around in the "corners"; and if they talked, they talked quietly, as if some ill-disposed person were there, and might overhear them.

All day nothing happened. But in the evening, as it grew dusk, the dogs began to howl; and, signifying some misfortune, a wind sprang up and howled in the chimneys; and such fear fell upon all the inhabitants of the dvor, that those who had candles lighted them before it was necessary; those who were alone in any "corner" went to ask their neighbors to give them a night's lodging where there were more people; and whoever had to go to the stables did not go, and did not hesitate to leave the cattle without fodder that night. And the holy water, which every one keeps in

[1] A sort of primitive guitar, with long neck, and short three-cornered sounding-board, strung with two or three strings, and thrummed with the fingers.

a vial, was all that night in constant requisition. Many were sure that they heard, during the night, some one walking up and down with a heavy tread over the loft; and the blacksmith saw how a serpent flew straight to the loft.

There was no one in Polikeĭ's "corner." The children and the crazy woman had been carried to other quarters. The dead little baby lay there, however. And there were two old dames and a pilgrim-woman[1] who diligently read the psalter, not for the sake of the child so much as for the solace of all this unhappiness. This was the mistress's desire. These old dames and the pilgrim-woman themselves heard, while one portion of the psalter was read, how the beam above creaked, and some one groaned. When they read the words, "Let God rise up," the sounds ceased.

The joiner's wife asked in one of her cronies; and that night they did not sleep, but drank up enough tea to last her a week. They also heard how the beams creaked up-stairs, and something sounded like the falling of heavy bags. The muzhiks on guard imparted some courage to the domestics, otherwise they would all have perished with fear. The muzhiks lay in the entry on the hay, and afterward they also became convinced that they heard marvels in the loft; although that same night they calmly talked about the *n*ecruits, munched their bread, combed their hair, and, most of all, filled the entry with that odor peculiar to the muzhiks, so that the joiner's wife, passing by them, spat, and scolded them for foul peasants.

However it was, the suicide all the time was hanging in the loft; and it seemed as if the evil spirit himself that night overshadowed the premises with his monstrous pinions, showing his power, and coming nearer to all these people than ever before. At least all of them had that impression.

I don't know whether they were right. I am inclined to think that they were entirely wrong. I think that if some man, that terrible night, had possessed courage

[1] *Strannitsa.*

enough to take a candle or a lantern, and, blessing himself, or even not blessing himself, with the sign of the cross, had gone to the loft, slowly driving before him, by the flame of the candle, the terror of the night, and lighting up the beams, the sand, the cobweb-garlanded chimney, and the joiner's wife's pelerine, — had gone straight up to Ilyitch, and if, not giving way to the feeling of fear, he had lifted the lantern to the level of his face, then he would have seen the familiar, emaciated body, with the legs touching the floor (the rope had stretched), lifelessly falling to one side, the unbuttoned shirt, under the opening of which his baptismal cross could not be seen, and with the head bent over on the breast, and the good-natured face, with the sightless eyes wide open, and the sweet, guilty smile, and a stern calmness, and silence over all.

Truly the joiner's wife, huddling up in the corner of her bed, with disheveled hair and frightened eyes, telling how she heard what seemed like bags falling, was a far more terrible and fear-inspiring object than Ilyitch, though he had taken off his cross and laid it on a bench.

"Above" — that is, at the great house — there was the same terror as reigned in the wing. In the lady's room there was an odor of *eau de cologne* and medicine. Dunyasha was melting beeswax, and making a cerate. Why a cerate especially, I know not; but I know that a beeswax plaster was always made when the mistress was ill. And now she was so disturbed that she was really ill.

Dunyasha's aunt had come to spend the night with her, so as to keep her courage up. Four of them were sitting in the girls' sitting-room, — among them the little maid, — and were quietly conversing.

"Who is going after the oil?" asked Dunyasha.

"I would n't go, not for anything, Avdot'ya Mikolavna," said the second girl, in a tone of determination.

"Come now, go with Aksiutka."

"I will run alone. I ain't afraid of nothing," said Aksiutka, "but she 's afraid of everything."

"Well, then, go ahead, dear; borrow it of Dame Anna, and don't spill it," said Dunyasha.

Aksiutka lifted her skirt with one hand, and though on account of this she could not swing both arms, she swung one twice as violently across the line of her direction, and flew off. It was terrible to her; and she felt that if she should see or hear anything whatever, even if it were her own mother, she should fall with fright. She flew, with her eyes shut, over the well-known path.

CHAPTER XIII

"Is our lady asleep, or not?" asked a muzhik's thick voice, suddenly, near Aksiutka. She opened her eyes, which had been tightly shut, and saw a form which it seemed to her was higher than the wing. She wheeled about, and sped back so fast that her petticoat did not have time to catch up with her. With one bound she was on the steps, with another in the sitting-room, and, giving a wild shriek, flung herself on the bed.

Dunyasha, her aunt, and the second girl almost died of fright; but they had no time to regain their courage, ere heavy, deliberate, and irresolute steps were heard in the entry and at the door.

Dunyasha ran into her mistress's room, dropping the cerate. The second girl hid behind a skirt which was hanging on the wall. The aunt, who had more resolution, was about to hold the door; but the door opened, and a muzhik strode into the room.

It was Dutlof in his huge boots. Paying no heed to the affrighted women, his eyes sought the ikons; and, not finding the small holy image that hung in the left corner, he crossed himself toward the cupboard, laid his cap down on the window, and, thrusting his thick hand into his sheepskin coat, just as if he were trying to scratch himself under the arm, he drew out a letter with five brown seals, imprinted with an anchor. Dunyasha's aunt put her hand to her breast; she was scarcely able to articulate:—

"How you frightened me, Naumuitch![1] I ca-n-n't sa-y a wo-r-d. I thought that the end .... had .... come."

"What do you want?" asked the second girl, emerging from behind the skirt.

"And they have stirred up our lady so," said Dunyasha coming from the other room. "What made you come up to the girls' sitting-room without knocking? You stupid muzhik!"

Dutlof, without making any excuse, said that he must see the mistress.

"She is ill," said Dunyasha.

By this time Aksiutka was snorting with such unbecomingly loud laughter, that she was again obliged to hide her head under the pillows, from which, for a whole hour, notwithstanding Dunyasha's and her aunt's threats, she was unable to lift it without falling into renewed fits of laughter, as if something were loose in her rosy bosom and red cheeks. It seemed to her so ridiculous that they were all frightened to death — and she again would hide her head, and, as it were in convulsions, shuffle her shoes, and shake with her whole body.

Dutlof straightened himself up, looked at her attentively, evidently wishing to account for this peculiar manifestation; but, not finding any solution, he turned away and continued to explain his errand.

"Of course, as this is a very important business," he said, "just tell her that a muzhik has brought her the letter with money."

"What money?"

Dunyasha, before referring the matter to the mistress, read the address, and asked Dutlof when and how he had got this money which Ilyitch should have brought back from the city. Having learned all the particulars, and sent the errand-girl, who still continued to laugh, out into the entry, Dunyasha went to the mistress; but to Dutlof's surprise the lady would not receive him at all, and sent no message to him through Dunyasha.

[1] The son of Nahum. It is customary among the peasantry to call each other by the patronymic. Thus Polikushka is generally called Ilyitch, son of Ilya, instead of a more formal Polikei Ilyitch.

"I know nothing about it, and wish to know nothing," said the mistress, "about any muzhik or any money. I cannot and I will not see any one. Let him leave me in peace."

"But what shall I do?" asked Dutlof, turning the envelop around and around; "it's no small amount of money. It's written on there, isn't it?" he inquired of Dunyasha, who again read to him the superscription.

It seemed hard for Dutlof to believe Dunyasha. He seemed to hope that the money did not belong to the gracious lady, and that the address read otherwise. But Dunyasha repeated it a second time. He sighed, placed the envelop in his breast, and prepared to go out.

"I must give it to the police inspector," he said.

"Wait, I will ask her again; I will tell her," said Dunyasha, detaining him when she saw the envelop disappearing under his coat. "Give me the letter."

Dutlof took it out again, but did not immediately put it into Dunyasha's outstretched hand.

"Tell her that Dutlof Semyon found it on the road."

"Well, give it here."

"I saw it and thought it was a letter. A soldier read for me that it had money."

"Well, let me have it."

"I didn't dare to go home on account of this," said Dutlof again, not letting go the precious envelop. "Well, let her see it."

Dunyasha took the envelop, and once more went to her ladyship.

"Oh,[1] Dunyasha," said the mistress, in a reproachful tone, "don't speak to me about this money. I can't think of anything else except that poor little babe."[2]....

"The muzhik, my lady,[3] don't know who you want him to give it to," insisted Dunyasha.

The lady broke the seals, shuddered as soon as she saw the money, and pondered for a moment.

[1] *Akh, Bozhe moï.*
[2] *Malyutatchka*, diminished; diminutive of *malui*, little.
[3] *Sudarinya.*

"Horrible money! how much harm it has done!" she mused.

"It is Dutlof, my lady.[1] Do you wish him to go, or will you come and see him? Is all the money there?" asked Dunyasha.

"I do not wish this money. This is horrible money. What harm it has done! Tell him that he may have it if he wants it," suddenly exclaimed the lady, trying to find Dunyasha's hand.

"Fifteen hundred rubles," remarked Dunyasha, smiling gently as to a child.

"Let him have it all," repeated the lady, impatiently. "Why don't you understand me? This is misfortune's money; don't ever speak about it to me again. Let this muzhik have it, since he found it. Go, go, I tell you!"

Dunyasha returned into the girls' sitting-room.

"Was it all there?" asked Dutlof.

"Count it yourself," said Dunyasha, handing him the envelop; "she told me to give it to you."

Dutlof stuffed his cap under his arm, and, bending over, tried to count.

"Have n't you got a counting-machine?"

Dutlof supposed that it was a whim of the mistress's not to count, and that she had bidden him to do it.

"Take it home, and count it. It 's yours, — your money," said Dunyasha, severely. "Says she, 'I don't want to see it; give it to the man who brought it.'"

Dutlof, not straightening himself up, fixed his eyes on Dunyasha.

Dunyasha's aunt clapped her hands.

"Goodness gracious![2] God has given you such luck! Goodness sakes!"

The second girl could not believe it.

"You 're joking! Did really Avdot'ya Nikolayevna say that?"

"What do you mean .... joking! She told me to give

[1] *Sudarinya.*

[2] *Matushki rodimuia*, mother of mothers, literally "native little mothers." Her second exclamation is *matushki rodnuia*, a similar call upon her "own mothers" if expletives had any literal meaning. — Ed.

it to the muzhik. .... Now take your money, and be off," said Dunyasha, not hiding her vexation. "One has sorrow, another joy."

"You must be joking, — fifteen hundred rubles!" said the aunt.

"More than that," said Dunyasha, sharply. "Now you will place a great big candle for Mikola,"[1] she continued sarcastically. "What! have you lost your wits? It would be good for some poor fellow. And he has so much of his own."

Dutlof finally realized that it was not a joke; and he began to fold together and put into the envelop the money, which in the counting he had separated; but his hands trembled, and he kept looking at the women, to persuade himself that it was not a jest.

"You see you have n't got your wits yet, with your joy," said Dunyasha, making it evident that she despised both the muzhik and money. "Give it to me; I 'll put it in for you."

And she offered to take it, but Dutlof did not trust it in her hands. He doubled the money up, thrust it in still farther, and took his cap.

"Glad?"

"I don't know; what 's to be said? Here it 's...." He did not finish his sentence, but waved his hand, grinned, almost burst into tears, and went out.

The bell tinkled in the mistress's room.

"Well, did you give it to him?"

"I did."

"Well, was he very glad?"

"He was like one gone crazy."

"Oh, bring him back! I want to ask him how he found it. Bring him in here. I can't go out to him."

Dunyasha flew out, and overtook the muzhik in the entry. He had not put on his hat, but had taken out his purse, and, bending over, was opening it; but the money he held between his teeth. Maybe it seemed to him that it was not his until he had put it in his purse. When Dunyasha called him back, he was startled.

[1] A ten-kopek candle for St. Nicholas.

"What .... Avdotya? .... Avdotya Mikolavna? Is she going to take it away from me? If you would only take my part, I would bring you some honey .... before God I would."

"All right, bring it."

Again the door opened, and the muzhik was introduced into the mistress's presence. It was not a happy moment for him. "Akh! she's going to take it back!" he said to himself, as he went through the rooms, lifting his feet very high, as if he were walking through tall grass, so as not to make a noise with his big bast shoes. He did not comprehend, and he scarcely noticed what was around him. He passed by the mirror; he saw some flowers, a muzhik lifting up his feet shod in bast shoes, the barin painted, with one eye, and something which seemed to him like a green tub, and a white object. ....

Suddenly, from the white object issued a voice. It was the mistress. He could not distinguish any one clearly, but he rolled his eyes around. He knew not where he was, and everything seemed to be in a mist.

"Is it you, Dutlof?"

"It's me, your ladyship.[1] It's just as it was. I didn't touch it," he said. "I was n't glad, — before God, I was n't. I almost killed my horse." ....

"It's your good luck," she said, with a disdainfully good-natured smile. "Keep it. It's yours."

He only opened wide his eyes.

"I am glad that you have it. God grant that it prove useful to you. But why are you glad to have it?"

"How could I help being glad? Glad as I can be, matushka! I will always pray to God for you. I am as glad as I can be, that, glory to God, our mistress is alive. Only it was through my fault. ...."

"How did you find it?"

"You know that we can always work for our lady for honor's sake, and, if not that ...."

"He's getting all mixed up, my lady," said Dunyasha.

"I had carried my nephew, who's gone as a recruit,

[1] *Ya-s sudarinya.*

and on my way back I found it on the road. Polikeï must have dropped it accidentally."

"Well, now go, now go! I am glad."

"So am I glad, matushka," said the muzhik.

Then he recollected that he had not thanked her, but he did not know how to go about it in the proper manner. The lady and Dunyasha both smiled, as he again started to walk, as if through tall grass, and by main force conquered his impulse to break into a run. But all the time it seemed to him that they were going to hold him, and take it from him. ....

CHAPTER XIV

Making his way out into the fresh air, Dutlof turned off from the road to the lindens, unloosed his belt so as more conveniently to get at his purse, and began to put away the money. He moved his lips, sucking them in and pushing them out again, though he made no sound.

After he had stowed away the money, and tightened his belt again, he crossed himself, and went rolling along the path as if he were drunk, so absorbed was he by the thoughts rushing through his brain.

Suddenly he saw before him the form of a muzhik, coming to meet him. He called to him. It was Yefim, who, with a club, was acting as guard on the outside of the wing.

"Ah, Uncle Semyon," said Yefimka, joyfully, as he came nearer. (It was rather gloomy for him to be all alone.) "Well, have you got the recruits off?"

"Yes. What are you doing?"

"They stationed me here to guard Ilyitch, who hung himself."

"But where is he?"

"Here in the loft; they say he's hanging there," replied Yefimka, pointing with his stick through the darkness, to the roof of the wing.

Dutlof looked in the direction indicated; and though he saw nothing, he blinked his eyes and shook his head.

"The police inspector has come," said Yefimka. "The coachman told me. They are going to take him right down. Kind of a fearful night, uncle.[1] I would n't go in there to-night, not even if orders had come from the 'upper' house. Not if Yegor Mikhaluitch beat me to death would I go in there."

"What a terrible misfortune!" said Dutlof, evidently from a sense of propriety; for in reality he was not thinking of what he was saying, and was anxious to go his way. But the overseer's voice chained him to the spot.

"Hey, guard, come here!" cried Yegor Mikhaïlovitch, from the steps.

Yefimka responded to the call.

"What muzhik was standing there with you?"

"Dutlof."

"You too, Semyon, come here."

As Dutlof drew near, he saw, by the light of the lantern carried by the coachman, not only the overseer, but a short little man in a uniform cap with a cockade, and wearing a cloak; this was the *stanovoï*, or police inspector.

"Here is an old man will go with us," said Yegor Mikhaïlovitch, pointing to him.

The old man winced, but there was no way of escape.

"And you, Yefimka, you 're only a young man; just run on ahead to the loft where he 's hanging, and clear away the stairs so that his honor can get up."

Yefimka, in spite of his dislike for going into the wing, started off, tramping in his bast shoes as if they were beams.

The police inspector struck a light, and began to smoke his pipe. He lived two versts away; and he had just been receiving from the *ispravnik*, or captain of police, a sharp dressing for drunkenness, and was, consequently, still suffering from an attack of ill humor: having got there at ten o'clock in the evening, he wished to have no delay in inspecting the suicide's body.

Yegor Mikhaïlovitch asked Dutlof why he was there.

[1] *D'yadiushka*, diminutive *d'yad'ya*.

As he walked along Dutlof told the overseer about the finding of the money, and what the mistress had done. Dutlof said that he had come to ask Yegor Mikhaïlovitch's permission. The overseer, to Dutlof's horror, demanded the envelop, and looked at it. The police inspector also took the envelop, and asked, in a few dry words, about the particulars.

"Now, good-by to my money," thought Dutlof, and began already to excuse himself. But the police inspector gave him back the money.

"That's luck for the clown!" he said.

"Comes in good time," said Yegor Mikhaïlovitch. "He's just taken his nephew to camp. Now he can buy him off."

"Ah!" said the police inspector, and started on.

"Are you going to hire a substitute for Ilyushka?" inquired the overseer.

"How hire him a substitute? Is there money enough? And, besides, it's too late."

"You know best," said the overseer, and both followed the police inspector.

They went into the wing, at the entry of which the ill-smelling guards were waiting with a lantern. Dutlof followed them. The guards had a guilty look, which was to be attributed only to the odor arising from them, because they had been doing nothing wrong. All were silent.

"Where?" asked the police inspector.

"Here," said Yegor Mikhaïlovitch. "Yefimka," he added, "you're a fine young man, go ahead with the lantern."

Yefimka had already removed the plank up-stairs; it seemed as if he had lost all his fear. Taking two or three steps he climbed up, only glancing round, with a cheerful face, and throwing the light on the police inspector's way. Behind the inspector followed the overseer. When they were out of sight, Dutlof, resting one foot on the step, sighed and stopped. In the course of two minutes, the sound of the steps in the loft ceased; evidently they had reached the body.

"Uncle! you're wanted," cried Yefimka, at the head of the stairs.

Dutlof went up. The police inspector and Yegor Mikhaïlovitch could be seen in the light of the lantern, but the beam partly hid them from sight. Near them stood some one else with back toward them. It was Polikeï. Dutlof went beyond the beam, and, crossing himself, halted.

"Turn him round, boys," commanded the coroner.

No one stirred.

"Yefimka, you're a fine young man," said the overseer.

The "fine young man" walked up to the beam, and, turning Ilyitch's body round, stood by it, looking with the same cheerful expression, now at Ilyitch, now at the officer, just as a showman exhibiting an albino, or some monstrosity,[1] looks now at the public, now at the object of his exhibition, and is ready to fulfil all the desires of his spectators.

"Turn him round again."

The body turned around once more, waved its hands slightly, and the leg made a circle on the sanded floor.

"Come now, take him down."

"Do you order him cut down, Vasili Borisovitch?" demanded the overseer. "Bring an ax, friends!"

Twice the order had to be given to Dutlof and the guards to lift him up. But the "fine young man" handled Ilyitch as he would the carcass of a sheep. Finally they cut the rope, took down the body, and threw a cloth over it.

The police inspector said that the doctor would come on the next day, and sent the people away.

[1] Yulia Pastrana, a girl like a monkey, with hairy arms and face, exhibited all over Europe, some years ago.

CHAPTER XV

Dutlof, still moving his lips, went home. At first, it was painful for him; but in proportion as he drew near the village, this feeling passed away, and a feeling of pleasure more and more penetrated his heart.

Songs and drunken voices were heard in the village. Dutlof never drank, and now he went straight home. It was already late when he reached his cottage.[1] His old woman was asleep. His oldest son and the grandchildren were asleep on the oven, the other son in the closet. The nephew's wife[2] was the only person awake; and she, in a dirty, every-day shirt, with her hair unkempt, was sitting on the bench, and weeping. She did not get up to open the door for the uncle, but began to weep more bitterly, and to reproach him, as soon as he came into the cottage. In the old woman's opinion, she talked very clearly and well, though, being still young, she could not have had any practice.

The old woman got up, and began to get her husband something to eat. Dutlof drove his nephew's wife away from the table. "That'll do! that'll do!" said he. Aksinya got up, and then, throwing herself down on the bench, still continued to weep. The old woman silently set the things on the table, and then put them in order. The old man also refrained from saying a single word. After performing his devotions, he belched once or twice, washed his hands, and, taking the abacus down from the nail, went to his closet. There he began to whisper with his old wife; then the old woman left him alone, and he began to rattle the abacus; finally he lifted the lid of a chest, and climbed down into a sort of cellar. He rummaged round long in the closet and in the cellar. When he came out, it was dark in the cottage; the splinter had burnt out.

The old woman, who by day was ordinarily mild and quiet, had retired to her room, and was snoring so as to be heard all over the cottage. Ilyushkin's wife, who was

[1] *Izba.* [2] *Ilyushkin a baba.*

usually noisy, was also asleep, and her breathing could not be heard. She was asleep on the bench just as she was, not having undressed, and without anything under her head.

Dutlof said his prayers, then glanced at his niece, shook his head, blew out his splinter, and, after belching again, climbed up on the oven, and lay down next his grandson. In the darkness he took off his shoes, and lay on his back looking at the thatch-netting above the oven, the stove barely visible above his head; and listened to the cockroaches rustling over the wall, to the breathing, and to the restless moving of feet, and to the noises of the cattle in the yard.

It was long before he went to sleep. The moon came up, and it grew lighter in the cottage. He could see Aksinya in the corner, and something which he could not make out. Was it a cloak that his son had forgotten? or had the women left a tub there? or was it some one standing? Whether he drowsed or not, who can say? but now he began to look again. ....

Evidently that dark spirit which led Ilyitch to commit the terrible deed, and which impressed the domestics that night with its presence, — evidently that spirit spread its pinions over the whole estate, and over Dutlof's cottage, where was concealed that money which *he* enjoyed at the cost of Ilyitch's ruin.

At all events, Dutlof felt IT there. And Dutlof was not in his usual spirits, — could not sleep, nor sit up. When he saw something he could not explain, he remembered Ilyukha with his pinioned arms, he remembered Aksinya's face and her flowing discourse, he remembered Ilyitch with his dangling hands.

Suddenly it seemed to the old man that some one passed by the window.

"What is that? Can it be the elder[1] has come to ask the news?" he said to himself. "How did he unlock the door?" the old man asked himself in surprise, hearing steps in the entry; "or did the old woman leave it open when she went to the door?"

[1] *Starosta.*

The dog howled in the back yard, but IT passed along the entry, and, as the old man afterward related the story, seemed to hunt for the door, passed by, once more tried to feel along the wall, stumbled across the tub and it rang. And once more IT tried to feel along the wall, actually found the latch-string. Then took hold of it. A chill ran over the old man's body.

Here the latch was lifted, and the form of a man came in. Dutlof already knew that it was IT. He tried to get hold of his cross, but could not. IT came to the table, on which lay a cloth, threw it on the floor, and came to the oven. The old man knew that IT was in Ilyitch's form. He trembled; his hands shook. IT came to the oven, threw itself on the old man, and began to choke him.

"My money," said *Ilyitch*.

Semyon tried, but could not say, "Let me go, I will not."

Ilyitch pressed down on him all the weight of a mountain of stone resting on his breast. Dutlof knew that if he could say a prayer IT would leave him; and he knew what kind of a prayer he ought to say, but this prayer would not form itself on his lips.

His grandson was sleeping next him. The boy uttered a piercing scream, and began to weep. The grandfather had crowded him against the wall.

The child's cry unsealed the old man's lips.

"Let God arise up," he repeated.

IT loosed its hold a little.

"And scatter our enemies," whispered Dutlof.

IT got down from the oven. Dutlof listened as IT struck both feet against the floor. Dutlof kept repeating all the prayers that he knew; said them all in order.

IT went to the door, passed the table, and struck the door such a rap that the cottage trembled.

Every one was asleep except the old man and his grandson. The grandfather repeated the prayers, and trembled all over: the grandson wept as he fell asleep, and cuddled up to his grandfather.

All became quiet again. The old man lay motion-

less. The cock crowed behind the wall at Dutlof's ear. He heard how the hens began to stir themselves; how the young cockerel endeavored to imitate the old cock, and did not succeed. Something moved on the old man's legs. It was the cat. She jumped down on her soft paws from the oven to the ground, and began to miew at the door.

The grandfather got up and opened the window. In the street it was dark, muddy. The front of the wagon stood there under the very window. He went in his bare feet through the yard [1] to the horses, crossing himself as he went.

And here it was evident that the master [2] was coming. The mare, fastened under the shed by the wall, with her leg caught in the bridle, was lying in the husks, and, turning her head around, was waiting for the master. The foal was stretched out on the manure. The old man lifted him on his legs, freed the mare, gave her some fodder, and went back to the cottage. The old woman had got up, and kindled the fire.

"Wake the boys; I am going to town."

And, lighting one of the wax candles that stood before the sacred images, he took it, and went with it down into the cellar. When he came up, not only was his own fire burning, but those in the neighboring cottages were lighted. The children were up, and all ready. Women were coming and going with pails and tubs of milk. Ignat was harnessing a telyega. The other son was oiling another. The niece [3] was no longer weeping, but, dressed in her best, and with a shawl on, was sitting on the bench in the cottage, and waiting for the time to go to town and say good-by to her husband.

The old man had an appearance of peculiar sternness. He said not a word to any one; put on his new kaftan, belted himself tightly, and, with all of Polikeï's money under his coat, went to the overseer.

"You wait for me," he shouted to Ignat, who was

[1] *Dvor.* [2] *Khozyaïn.*
[3] *Molodaïka*, young peasant wife.

whirling the wheel round on the raised axle, and oiling it. "I 'll be back in a moment. Be all ready."

The overseer, who was just up, was drinking his tea, and had made his preparations to go to the city to deliver the recruits over to the authorities.

"What do you wish?" he asked.

"Yegor Mikhaluitch, I want to buy the young fellow off. Be so good. You told me a day or two ago that you knew a substitute in the city. Tell me how. I am ignorant."

"What! have you reconsidered it?"

"I have, Yegor Mikhaluitch. It 's too bad.... my brother's son. Whatever he did, I 'm sorry for him. Much sin comes from it, from this money. So please tell me," said he, making a low bow.

Yegor Mikhaïlovitch sucked in his lips silently, as he always did in such circumstances, and went into a brown study; then, having made up his mind, wrote two letters, and told him what and how he must do in town.

When Dutlof reached home, the niece was just coming out with Ignat; and the pot-bellied roan mare, all harnessed, was standing at the gate. He broke off a switch from the hedge. Wrapping himself up, he took his seat on the box, and started up the horse.

Dutlof drove the mare so fast that her belly seemed to shrink away, and he dared not look at her lest he should feel compunction. He was tormented by the thought that he might be late in reaching camp, that Ilyukha would have already gone as a soldier, and that the *devilish* money would still be in his hands.

I am not going to give a detailed description of all Dutlof's adventures that morning. I will only say that he was remarkably successful. At the house of the man to whom the overseer gave him a letter there was a substitute ready and waiting, who had already spent twenty-three silver rubles, and had been accepted by the authorities. His master [1] wanted to get for him four hundred rubles; but another man,[2] who had already been

[1] *Khozhyaïn.*

[2] A *meshchanin,* corresponding to the French term *bourgeois.*

after him for more than two weeks, was anxious to beat him down to three hundred.

Dutlof concluded the business with few words. "Will you take three hundred and twenty-five?" said he, offering his hand, but with an expression which made it evident that he was ready to give even more. The master held out his hand, and continued to demand four hundred.

"Won't you take three hundred and twenty-five?" repeated Dutlof, seizing the master's right hand with his left, and making the motion to clap it with the other. "You won't take it? Well, God be with you," he exclaimed, suddenly striking hands with the master, and, with the violence of the motion, swinging his whole body round from him. "Then, make it this way! Take three hundred and fifty. Make out the *fitanets*.[1] Bring the young man. And now for the earnest-money. Will two ten-ruble pieces do?"

And Dutlof unbuckled his belt, and drew out the money.

Though the master did not withdraw his hand, yet apparently he was not wholly satisfied, and before accepting the earnest-money, he demanded a fee and a "treat" for the substitute.

"Don't commit a sin," said Dutlof, pressing the money on him. "We must all die," he went on in such a short, didactic, and confident voice that the master said, "There's nothing to be done," once more shook hands, and began to say a prayer. "With God's blessing," he said.

They awoke the substitute, who was still sleeping off his yesterday's spree; they inspected him, and then all went to the authorities. The substitute was hilarious, asked to be refreshed with some rum, for which Dutlof gave him money, and began to lose his courage only at the moment when they first entered the vestibule of the court-house.

They stood long in the vestibule; the old master[2] in

[1] Mispronunciation of *quittance*.
[2] *Starik-khozyaïn*; literally, old-man-master.

a blue *sibirka*, or overcoat, and the substitute in a short sheepskin jacket, with lifted eyebrows and wide-staring eyes; long they stood there whispering together, asked questions of this man and that, were sent from pillar to post, took off their hats and bowed before every petty clerk, and solemnly listened to the speech made by a clerk whom the master knew.

All hope of finishing the business that day was vanishing, and the substitute was already beginning to feel more cheerful and easy, when Dutlof caught sight of Yegor Mikhaïlovitch, immediately went to him, and began to beseech him and make low bows.

The overseer's influence was so powerful that by three o'clock the substitute, much to his disgust and surprise, was conducted into the audience-chamber, enrolled on the army list, and to the satisfaction of every one, from door-tender to president, was stripped, shaved, dressed in uniform, and sent out to camp. And at the end of five minutes Dutlof had paid the money over and taken his receipt; and after saying good-by to the recruit and his master, he went to the merchant's lodging-house, where the recruits from Pokrovskoye were stopping.

Ilya and his wife were sitting in one corner of the merchant's kitchen; and as soon as the old man came in they ceased talking, and gazed at him with a humble and yet hostile expression.

"Don't be vexed, Ilyukha," he said, approaching his nephew. "Day before yesterday you said a harsh word to me. Am I not sorry for you? I remember how my brother commended you to my care. If it had been in my power, would I have let you go? God granted me a piece of good fortune; you see I have not been mean. Here is this paper," said he, laying the receipt on the table, and carefully smoothing it out with his crooked, stiffened fingers.

All of the Prokrovski muzhiks, and the merchant's people, and also some of the neighbors, came into the cottage.[1] All watched inquisitively what was going on. No one interrupted the old man's triumphal words.

[1] *Izba.*

"Here's the paper. I paid nearly four hundred silver rubles for it. Don't blame your uncle!"

Ilyukha stood up, but said nothing, not knowing what to say. His lips trembled with emotion. His old mother came to him sobbing, and wanted to throw herself on his neck; but the old man slowly and imperiously pushed her away with his hand, and proceeded to speak:—

"You said one word to me," repeated the old man. "With that word you stabbed me to the heart, as with a knife. Your dying father commended you to my care. You have taken the place of my own son; but if I have done you any harm, I am sorry. We are all sinners. Is that not so, Orthodox believers?" he asked, turning to the muzhiks standing around. "Here is your own mother, and your young wife;[1] here is the *fitanets* for you. God bless it,—the money. But forgive me, for Christ's sake!"

And, spreading his cloak out on the floor, he slowly got down on his knees, and bent low before the feet of Ilyushka and his wife. The young people tried in vain to raise him; not until he had touched his head to the ground did he rise and, shaking himself, sit down upon the bench. Ilyushka's mother and the young wife wept for joy. In the crowd were heard voices expressing approbation.

"That's right, that's God's way," said one.

"What money? It must have taken a lot."

"What a joy!" said a third. "A righteous man, that's the word for it."

But the muzhiks who had been named as recruits said nothing, and went noiselessly out into the courtyard.

Within two hours, the two telyegas of the Dutlofs were driving through the suburbs of the city. In the first, drawn by the pot-bellied roan mare with sweaty neck, sat the old man and Ignat. Behind rattled bundles containing kettles and loaves of bread.[2] In the second telyega, which no one drove, sat the young wife and her mother-in-law, dignified and happy, wrapped up in shawls. The young woman held a jug under her apron.

[1] *Khozyaïka.* [2] *Kalatchi.*

Ilyushka, with ruddy face, and bending over with his back to the horse, and shaking on the dasher, was munching a kalatch, and talking in a steady stream. And the voices, and the rumble of the wheels on the pavement, and the occasional snorting of the horses, all united into one merry sound. The horses, switching their tails, trotted along steadily, feeling that they were on the home stretch. Those whom they passed and those whom they met looked on a happy family.

Just as they were leaving the city the Dutlofs overtook a detachment of recruits. A group of the soldiers stood in a circle in front of a drinking-saloon. One recruit, with that peculiarly unnatural expression which a shorn brow gives a man, with his gray uniform cap pushed on the back of his head, was skilfully picking on a three-stringed balalaïka; another, without anything on his head, and holding a bottle of vodka in one hand, was dancing in the midst of the circle. Ignat halted his horse, and got out to shorten the traces. All the Dutlofs looked on with curiosity, satisfaction, and joy, at the man who was dancing.

The recruit did not seem to notice any one, but had the consciousness that an admiring public was attracted by his antics, and this gave him strength and agility. He danced dexterously. His forehead was wrinkled, his ruddy face was motionless, his mouth was parted in a smile which had long lost all expression. It seemed as if all the energies of his soul were directed to making one leg follow the other with all possible swiftness, now on the heel and now on the toe. Sometimes he would suddenly stop, and signal to the accompanist, who would instantly begin to thrum on all the strings, and even to rap on the back of the instrument with his knuckles. The recruit stopped, but even when he stopped still, he seemed, as it were, to be all the time dancing. Then he began to slacken his pace, shrugging his shoulders, and, suddenly leaping into the air, landed on his heels, and with a wild shriek squatted down.

The lads laughed, the women shook their heads, the men smiled with satisfaction. An old non-commissioned

officer stood calmly near the dancer with a look that said, "To you this is wonderful, but to *us* it's an old story." The balalaïka-player was evidently tired, surveyed the crowd with a cool stare, struck a false chord, and suddenly rapped his fingers on the back, and the dance, or plyaska, was ended.

"Hey! Alyokha," cried the accompanist to the dancer, and pointed to Dutlof. "There's your sponsor!"

"Where? O my dearly beloved friend!" screamed the recruit, — the same one whom Dutlof had bought, — and, stumbling out on his weary feet, and lifting his bottle of vodka above his head, he made for the team. "Mishka! waiter! a glass," he shouted. "Master! O my dear old friend! How glad I am! fact!" he went on, jerking his tipsy head toward the telyega, and began to treat the muzhiks and the women to vodka. The muzhiks accepted, the women declined. "You are darlings, why should n't I treat you?" cried the recruit, throwing his arms around the old women.

A woman peddling eatables was standing in the throng. The recruit saw her, grabbed her tray, and flung its contents into the telyega.

"D-don't worry, I 'll p-pay — the d-devil," he began to scream, in a drunken voice; and here he drew out of his stocking a purse with money in it, and flung it to Mishka.

He stood leaning with his elbows on the wagon, and stared, with moist eyes, at those who sat in it.

"Which is my matushka?" he asked. "Be you her? I 've got something for her too."

He pondered a moment, and, diving into his pocket, brought out a new handkerchief folded, untied another which he had put on as a girdle under his coat, hastily took the red scarf from his neck, bundled them together, and thrust them into the old woman's lap.

"Na! I give 'em to you," he said, in a voice that grew weaker and weaker.

"Why? thank you, friend! — What a simple lad he is!" said she, addressing the old man Dutlof, who came up to their telyega.

The recruit was now entirely quiet and dumb, and kept dropping his head lower and lower, as if he were going to sleep then and there.

"I 'm going for you, I 'm going to destruction for you," he repeated. "And so I make you a present."

"I s'pose he 's really got a mother," cried some one in the crowd. "Fine young fellow! Too bad!"

The recruit lifted his head.

"I 've got a mother," he said. "I 've got a father[1] too. They 've all given me up, though. Listen, old woman!" he added, seizing Ilyushka's mother by the hand. "I made you a present. Listen to me, for Christ's sake. Go to my village of Vodnoye, ask there for Nikonof's old woman, — she 's my own mother, you understand, — and tell this same old woman, Nikonof's old woman .... third hut at the end .... new pump .... tell her that Alyokha .... your son .... you know .... Come! musician, strike up!" he screamed.

And once more he began to dance, talking all the time, and spilling, all over the ground, the vodka that was left in the bottle.

Ignat climbed into his wagon, and started to drive on.

"Good-by, good luck to you," cried the old woman, as she wrapped herself up in her sheepskin.

The recruit suddenly stopped.

"Go to the devil!" he shouted, threatening the teams with his doubled fist.

"Oh, good Lord!"[2] ejaculated Ilyushka's mother, crossing herself.

Ignat started up the mare, and the teams drove away. Alekseï the recruit still stood in the middle of the road, and doubling up his fists, with an expression of wrath on his face, berated the muzhiks to the best of his ability.

"What are you standing here for? She 's gone. The devil, cannibals!" he screamed. "You won't escape from me! You devils! You dotards!" ....

With these words his voice failed him; he fell at full length, just where he stood in the middle of the road.

[1] *Matushka*, mother, or little mother; *batyushka*, little father.
[2] *Okh Gospodi*.

Swiftly the Dutlofs drove across the country, and as they looked around, the crowd of recruits was already lost from sight. When they had gone five versts, and were slowing up a little, Ignat got out of his father's wagon, when the old man was drowsing, and got in with his cousin.

The two young men drank up the jug of vodka which they had brought from the city. Then, after a little, Ilya struck up a song; the women joined in with him; Ignat gayly shouted in harmony. A jolly party, in a post-wagon, dashed swiftly by. The driver shouted to the horses harnessed to the two jolly telyegas. The postilion glanced at the handsome faces of the muzhiks and the women in the telyega as they dashed by, singing their merry songs, and winked, and waved his hand.

KHOLSTOMER

THE HISTORY OF A HORSE[1]

(1861)

CHAPTER I

EVER higher and higher rose the sky, wider spread the dawn, whiter grew the pallid silver of the dew, more lifeless the sickle of the moon, more vocal the forest. ....

People were beginning to arise; and at the stables belonging to the barin were heard with increasing frequency the whinnying of the horses, the stamping of hoofs on the straw, and also the angry, shrill neighing of the animals collecting together, and even disputing with one another over something.

"We-e-ll! you've got time enough; half-starved, ain't you?" said the old drover, quickly opening the creaking gates. "Where you going?" he shouted, waving his hands at a mare which tried to run through the gate.

Nester, the drover, was dressed in a *kazakin*, or Cossack coat, with a decorated leather belt around his waist; his knout was slung over his shoulder, and a handkerchief, containing some bread, was tied into his belt. In his arms he carried a saddle and halter.

The horses were not in the least startled, nor did they show any resentment, at the drover's sarcastic tone; they made believe that it was all the same to them, and

[1] Dedicated to the memory of M. A. Stakhovitch, the originator of the subject, which was given by his brother to Count Tolstoï.

leisurely moved away from the gate, — all except one old dark bay mare, with a long flowing mane, who laid back her ears and quickly turned around. At this opportunity a young mare, who was standing behind, and had nothing at all to do with this, whinnied, and began to kick at the first horse she fell in with.

"No!" shouted the drover, still more loudly and fiercely, and turned to the corner of the yard.[1]

Out of all the horses — there must have been nearly a hundred — that were moving off toward their breakfast, none manifested so little impatience as a piebald gelding, which stood alone in one corner under the shed, and gazed with half-shut eyes, and licked the oak stanchion of the shed.

It is hard to say what enjoyment the piebald gelding got from this, but his expression while doing so was solemn and thoughtful.

"Wake up!" again cried the drover, in the same tone, turning to him; and, going up to him, he laid the saddle and shiny saddle-cloth on a pile of manure near him.

The piebald gelding ceased licking the stanchion, and looked long at Nester without moving. He did not manifest any sign of mirth or anger or sullenness, but only drew in his whole belly and sighed heavily, heavily, and then turned away. The drover took him by the neck, and gave him his breakfast.

"What are you sighing for?" asked Nester.

The horse switched his tail as if to say, "Well, it's all right, Nester."

Nester put on the saddle-cloth and saddle, whereupon the horse pricked up his ears, expressing as plainly as could be his disgust; but he received nothing but execrations for this "rot," and then the saddle-girth was pulled tight.

At this the gelding tried to swell out; but his mouth was thrust open, and a knee was pressed into his side, so that he was forced to let out his breath. Notwithstanding this, when they got the bit between his teeth, he once more pricked back his ears, and even looked

[1] *Dvor.*

round. Though he knew that this was of no avail, yet he seemed to reckon it essential to express his displeasure, and that he always would show it. When he was saddled, he pawed with his swollen right leg, and began to champ the bit, — here also for some special reason, because it was time for him to know that there could be no taste in bits.

Nester mounted the gelding by the short stirrups, unwound his knout, freed his Cossack coat from under his knee, settled down in the saddle in the position peculiar to coachmen, hunters, and drovers, and twitched on the reins.

The gelding lifted his head, showing a disposition to go where he should be directed, but he stirred not from the spot. He knew that before he went there would be much shouting on the part of him who sat on his back, and many orders to be given to Vaska, the other drover, and to the horses. In fact, Nester began to shout: —

"Vaska! ha, Vaska! have you let out any of the mares, — hey? Where are you, you old devil? No-o! Are you asleep? Open the gate. Let the mares go first," and so on.

The gates creaked. Vaska, morose, and still full of sleep, holding a horse by the bridle, stood at the gate-post and let the horses out. The horses, one after the other, gingerly stepping over the straw and snuffing it, began to pass out, — the young fillies, the yearlings, the little colts; while the mares, heavy with young, stepped along heedfully, one at a time, lifting their bellies. The young fillies sometimes crowded in two at once, three at once, throwing their heads across one another's backs, and hitting their hoofs against the gates, each time receiving a volley of abuse from the drovers. The colts sometimes kicked the mares they did not know, and whinnied loudly in answer to the short neighing of their mothers.

A young filly, full of wantonness, as soon as she got outside the gate, tossed her head and shook it, began to back, and whinnied, but nevertheless did not venture to dash ahead of the old gray, grain-bestrewed Zhulduiba,

who, with a gentle but solid step, swinging her belly from side to side, marched along, as always the dignified leader of the other horses.

After a few moments the yard but now so lively was left in melancholy loneliness; the posts stood out in sadness under the empty sheds, and only the sodden straw, soiled with dung, was to be seen.

Familiar as this picture of emptiness was to the piebald gelding, it seemed to have a melancholy effect on him. Slowly, as if making a bow, he lowered and lifted his head, sighed as deeply as the tightly drawn girth permitted, and, dragging his somewhat bent and decrepit legs, he started off after the herd, carrying the old Nester on his bony back.

"I know now. As soon as we get out on the road, he will go to work to make a light, and smoke his wooden pipe with its copper mounting and chain," thought the gelding. "I am glad of this, because it is early in the morning and the dew is on the grass, and this odor is agreeable to me, and brings up many pleasant recollections. I am sorry only that when the old man has his pipe in his mouth he always becomes excited, gets to imagining things, and sits on one side, infallibly on one side, and on that side it hurts. However, God be with him. It's no new thing for me to suffer for the sake of others. I have even come to find some equine satisfaction in this. Let him play that he's cock of the walk, poor fellow; but it's for his own pleasure that he looks so big, since no one sees him at all. Let him ride sidewise," said the horse to himself; and, stepping gingerly on his crooked legs, he walked along the middle of the road.

CHAPTER II

After driving the herd down to the river, near which the horses were to graze, Nester dismounted and took off the saddle. Meantime the herd began slowly to scatter over the as yet untrodden field, covered with

dew and with vapor rising alike from the damp meadow and the river that encircled it.

Taking off the bridle from the piebald gelding, Nester scratched him under his neck; and the horse in reply expressed his happiness and satisfaction by shutting his eyes.

"The old dog likes it," said Nester.

The gelding really did not like this scratching very much, and only out of delicacy pretended that it was agreeable to him. He nodded his head as a sign of assent. But suddenly, unexpectedly, and without any reason, Nester, imagining perhaps that too great familiarity might give the gelding false ideas about what he meant, — Nester, without any warning, pushed away his head, and, swinging the bridle, struck the horse very severely with the buckle on his lean leg, and, without saying anything, went up the hillock to a stump, near which he sat down as if nothing had happened.

Though this proceeding incensed the gelding, he showed no sign of it; and, leisurely switching his thin tail, and, sniffing at something, and merely for recreation cropping at the grass, he wandered down toward the river.

Not paying any heed to the antics played around him by the young fillies, the colts, and the yearlings, and knowing that the health of every one, and especially at his age, was subserved by getting a good drink of water on an empty stomach, and not eating till afterward, he turned his steps to where the bank was less steep and slippery; and, wetting his hoofs and gambrels, he thrust his snout into the river, and began to suck the water through his lips drawn back, to puff with his distending sides, and out of pure satisfaction to switch his thin, piebald tail with its leathery stump.

A chestnut filly, full of mischief, always nagging the old horse, and causing him manifold unpleasantnesses, came down to the water as if for her own necessities, but really merely for the sake of roiling the water in front of his nose.

But the piebald gelding had already drunk enough,

and apparently giving no thought to the impudent mare, calmly put one miry leg before the other, shook his head, and, turning aside from the wanton youngster, began to eat. Dragging his legs in a peculiar manner, and not tramping down the abundant grass, the horse grazed for nearly three hours, scarcely stirring from the spot. Having eaten so much that his belly hung down like a bag from his thin, sharp ribs, he stood solidly on his four weak legs, so that as little strain as possible might come on any one of them, — at least on the right fore leg, which was weaker than all, — and went to sleep.

There is an honorable old age, there is an odious old age, there is a pitiable old age; there is also an old age that is both honorable and odious. The old age which the piebald gelding had reached was of this latter sort.

The old horse was of a great size, — more than nineteen hands high.[1] His color was white, spotted with black; at least, it used to be so, but now the black spots had changed to a dirty brown. There were three of these spots: one on the head including an irregular-shaped star which ran down the side of the nose and half of the neck; the long mane, tangled with burrs, was partly white and partly brownish. The second spotted place ran along the right side, and covered half the belly; the third was on the flank, including the upper part of the tail and half of the loins; the rest of the tail was whitish, variegated.

The big bony head, with deep hollows under the eyes, and with pendent black lip, somewhat lacerated, hung heavily and low on the neck, which bent from its leanness, and seemed to be made of wood. From behind the pendent lip could be seen the dark-red tongue protruding on one side, and the yellow, worn tusks of his lower teeth. His ears, one of which was slit, fell over sidewise, and only occasionally he twitched them lazily to scare away the sticky flies. One long tuft still remaining of the forelock hung behind the ears; the broad forehead was hollowed and rough; the skin hung loose on the big cheek-bones. On the neck and head

[1] Two *arshin*, three *vershoks*, = 6.65 feet.

the veins stood out in knots, trembling and twitching whenever a fly touched them. The expression of his face was sternly patient, deeply thoughtful, and expressive of pain.

His fore legs were crooked at the knees. On both hoofs were swellings; and on the one which was half covered by the marking, there was near the knee at the back a sore boil. The hind legs were in better condition, but there had been severe bruises long before on the haunches, and the hair did not grow on those places. His legs seemed disproportionately long, because his body was so emaciated. His ribs, though also thick, were so exposed and drawn that the hide seemed dried in the hollows between them.

The back and withers were variated with old scars, and behind was still a freshly galled and purulent slough. The black stump of the tail, where the vertebræ could be counted, stood out long and almost bare. On the brown flank near the tail, where it was overgrown with white hairs, was a scar as big as one's hand, that must have been from a bite. Another cicatrice was to be seen on the front shoulder. The houghs of the hind legs and the tail were foul from a recent bowel disorder. The hair all over the body, though short, stood out straight.

But in spite of the loathsome old age to which this horse had come, any one looking at him would have involuntarily thought, and an expert would have said immediately, that he must have been in his day a remarkably fine horse. The expert would have said also that there was only one breed in Russia [1] that could give such broad bones, such huge joints, such hoofs, such slender leg-bones, such an arched neck, and, most of all, such a skull, — eyes large, black, and brilliant, and such a thoroughbred network of nerves over his head and neck, and such delicate skin and hair.

In reality there was something noble in the form of this horse, and in the terrible union in him of the repulsive signs of decrepitude, the increased variegatedness

[1] The best breed of Russian horses is that of the Orlofs.

of his hide, and his actions, and the expression of self-dependence, and the calm consciousness of beauty and strength.

Like a living ruin he stood in the middle of the dewy field, alone; while not far away from him were heard the galloping, the neighing, the lively whinnying, the snorting, of the scattered herd.

CHAPTER III

The sun was now risen above the forest and shone brightly on the grass and the winding river. The dew dried away and fell off in drops. Like smoke the last of the morning mist rolled up. Little curly clouds made their appearance, but as yet there was no wind. On the other side of the gleaming river stood the verdant rye, bending on its stalks, and the air was fragrant with fresh verdure and flowers. The cuckoo cooed from the forest with echoing voice; and Nester, lying flat on his back, was reckoning up how many years of life lay before him. The larks arose from the rye and the meadow. The belated hare, overtaken by the horses, went leaping across the field, and when it reached the copse it sat up and cocked its ears to listen.

Vaska went to sleep, burying his head in the grass; the mares, making wide circuits around him, scattered over the field below. The older ones, neighing, traced a shining track across the dewy grass, and kept trying to find some place where they might be undisturbed. They no longer grazed, but only nibbled on the succulent grass-blades. The whole herd was imperceptibly moving in one direction.

And again the old Zhulduiba, stately stepping before the others, showed that it was possible to keep going farther. The young Mushka, who had cast her first foal, kept hinnying, and, lifting her tail, was scolding her violet-colored colt. The young Atlasnaya, with smooth and shining skin, dropping her head so that her black and silken forelock hid her forehead and eyes, was

playing with the grass, nipping it and tossing it, and stamping her leg, with its furry fetlock. One of the older little colts, — he must have been imagining some kind of game, — lifting, for the twenty-sixth time, his rather short and tangled tail, like a plume, gamboled around his dam, who calmly picked at the herbage, having evidently already summed up her son's character, and only occasionally stopped to look askance at him out of her big black eye.

One of these same young colts — black as a coal, with a large head with a marvelous top-knot rising above his ears, and his tail still inclining to the side on which he had lain in his mother's belly — pricked up his ears, and opened his stupid eyes, as he stood motionless in his place, either out of jealousy or indignation, looking steadily at the colt jumping and dancing, and seemed not to understand at all why he did it.

Some suckled, butting with their noses; others, for some unknown reason, notwithstanding their mothers' invitation, would move along in a short, awkward trot, in a diametrically opposite direction, as if seeking something, and then, no one knows why, would stop short and hinny in a desperately penetrating voice. Some were lying on their sides in a row; some were taking lessons in grazing; some trying to scratch themselves with their hind legs behind the ear.

Two mares, still with young, went off by themselves, and, slowly moving their legs, continued to graze. Evidently their condition was respected by the others, and none of the young colts ventured to go near or disturb them. If any saucy young steed took it into his head to approach too near to them, then merely a motion of an ear or tail would be sufficient to show him all the impropriety of his behavior.

The yearlings and the young fillies pretend to be full-grown and dignified, and rarely indulge in pranks, or join their gay companions. They ceremoniously nibble at the blades of grass, bending their swanlike, short-shorn necks, and, as if they also were blessed with tails, switch their little brushes. Just like the big horses,

some of them lie down, roll over, and scratch one another's backs.

The jolliest band consists of the two-year-old and the three-year-old mares who have never foaled. They almost all wander off by themselves, and make a specially jolly virgin throng. Among them is heard a great tramping and stamping, hinnying and whinnying. They gather together, lay their heads over one another's shoulders, snuff the air, leap; and sometimes, lifting the tail like an oriflamme, proudly and coquettishly, in a half-trot, half-gallop, caracole in front of their companions.

Conspicuous for beauty and sprightly dashing ways, among all this young throng, was the wanton bay mare. Whatever she set on foot the others also did; wherever she went, there in her track followed also the whole throng of beauties.

The wanton was in a specially playful frame of mind this morning. The spirit of mischief was in her, just as it sometimes comes on men. Even at the riverside, playing her pranks on the old gelding, she had galloped along in the water, pretending that something had scared her, snorting, and then dashed off at full speed across the field; so that Vaska was constrained to gallop after her, and after the others who were at her heels. Then, after grazing a little while, she began to roll, then to tease the old mares, by dashing in front of them. Then she separated a suckling colt from its dam, and began to chase after it, pretending that she wanted to bite it. The mother was frightened, and ceased to graze; the little colt squealed in piteous tones. But the wanton young mare did not touch it, but only scared it, and made a spectacle for her comrades, who looked with sympathy on her antics.

Then she set out to turn the head of the roan horse which a muzhik, far away on the other side of the river, was driving with a *sokha*, or wooden plow, in the rye-field. She stood proudly, somewhat on one side, lifting her head high, shook herself, and neighed in a sweet, significant, and alluring voice. And frolic, gayety, and sentiment, and a touch of melancholy, were expressed in

the sound of her neighing. In it were also desire and the promise of love and the melancholy that is born of love.

'Twas the time when the rail-bird, running from place to place among the thick reeds, passionately calls his mate; when also the cuckoo and the quail sing of love; and the flowers send to one another, on the breeze, their aromatic dust.

"And I am young and beautiful and strong," said the jolly wanton's neighing, "and till now it has not been given to me to experience the sweetness of this feeling, never yet has it been given me to feel it; and no lover, no, not one, has yet come to woo me."

And the significant neighing rang with youthful melancholy over lowland and field, and it came to the ears of the roan horse far away. He pricked up his ears, and stopped. The muzhik kicked him with his wooden shoe; but the roan was bewitched by the silver sound of the distant neighing, and whinnied in reply. The muzhik grew angry, twitched him with the reins, and again kicked him in the belly with his bast shoe, so that he did not have a chance to complete all that he had to say in his neighing, but was forced to go on his way. And the roan horse felt a sweet sadness in his heart; and the sounds from the far-off rye-field, of that unfinished and passionate neigh, and the angry voice of the muzhik, long echoed in the ears of the herd.

If through one sound of her voice the roan horse could become so captivated as to forget his duty, what would have become of him if he had had full view of the beautiful wanton, as she stood pricking up her ears, inflating her nostrils, breathing in the air, and filled with longing, while her young and beauteous body trembled as she called to him?

But the wanton did not long ponder over her novel sensations. When the voice of the roan was still, she whinnied scornfully, and, sinking her head, began to paw the ground; and then she trotted off to wake up and tease the piebald gelding. The piebald gelding was a long-suffering butt for the amusement of this happy young wanton. She made him suffer more than men

did. But in neither case did he give way to wrath. He was useful to men, but why should these young horses torment him?

CHAPTER IV

He was old, they were young; he was lean, they were fat; he was sad, they were happy. So he was thoroughly strange, alien, an absolutely different creature; and it was impossible for them to have compassion on him. Horses have pity only on themselves, and only occasionally on those in whose skin they may easily imagine themselves. But, indeed, was not the piebald gelding himself to blame, in that he was old and gaunt and ugly?....

One would think that he was not to blame. But in equine ethics he was, and only those were right who were strong, young, and happy; those who had all life before them; those whose every muscle was tense with superfluous energy, and who curled their tails up into the air.

Maybe the piebald gelding himself understood this, and in tranquil moments was agreed that he was to blame because he had lived out all his life, that he must pay for his life; but he was after all only a horse, and he could not restrain himself often from feeling hurt, melancholy, and discontented, when he looked on all these young horses who tormented him for the very thing to which they would be subjected when they came to the end of their lives.

The reason for the heartlessness of these horses was a peculiarly aristocratic feeling. Every one of them was related, either on the side of father or mother, to the celebrated Smetanka; but it was not known from what stock the piebald gelding sprang. The gelding was a chance comer, bought at the market three years before for eighty paper rubles.

The young chestnut mare, as if accidentally wandering about, came up to the piebald gelding's very nose,

and brushed against him. He knew beforehand what it meant, and did not open his eyes, but laid back his ears and showed his teeth. The mare wheeled around, and made believe that she was going to let fly at him with her heels. He opened his eyes, and wandered off to another part. He had no desire as yet to go to sleep, and began to eat.

Again the wanton young mare, accompanied by her confederates, went to the gelding. A two-year-old mare with a star on her forehead, very silly, always in mischief, and always ready to imitate the chestnut mare, trotted along with her, and, as imitators always do, began to play the same trick that the instigator had done.

The brown mare would march along at an ordinary gait, apparently bent on her own affairs, and would pass by the gelding's very nose, not looking at him, so that he really did not know whether to be angry or not; and this was really ridiculous.

This was what she did now; but the starred mare, following in her steps, and feeling very gay, hit the gelding on the chest. He showed his teeth once more, whinnied, and, with a quickness of motion unexpected on his part, sprang at the mare, and bit her on the flank. The young mare with the star flew out with her hind legs, and kicked the old horse heavily on his thin bare ribs. The old horse uttered a hoarse noise, and was about to make another lunge, but thought better of it, and, sighing deeply, turned away.

It must have been that all the young horses of the drove regarded as a personal insult the boldness which the piebald gelding permitted himself to show toward the starred mare; for all the rest of the day they gave him no chance to graze, and left him not a moment of peace, so that the drover several times rebuked them, and could not comprehend what they were doing.

The gelding was so abused that he himself walked up to Nester when it was time for the old man to drive back the drove, and he showed greater happiness and content than usual when Nester saddled him and mounted him.

God knows what the old gelding's thoughts were as he bore on his back the old man Nester. Did he think with bitterness of these importunate and merciless youngsters? or, with a scornful and silent pride peculiar to old age, did he pardon his persecutors? At all events, he did not make manifest any of his thoughts till he reached home.

That evening some cronies had come to see Nester; and, as the horses were driven by the cottages of the domestics, he noticed a horse and telyega standing at his doorstep. After he had driven in the horses, he was in such haste that he did not take the saddle off; he left the gelding in the yard,[1] and shouted to Vaska to unsaddle the animal, then shut the gate, and hurried to his friends.

Perhaps, owing to the affront put on the starred mare, the descendant of Smetanka, by that "low trash" bought for a horse, and not knowing father or mother, and therefore offending the aristocratic sentiment of the whole community; or because the gelding with the high saddle without a rider presented a strangely fantastic spectacle for the horses, — at all events, that night something extraordinary took place in the paddock. All the horses, young and old, showing their teeth, tagged after the gelding, and drove him from one part of the yard to the other; the trampling of their hoofs echoed around him as he sighed and drew in his thin sides.

The gelding could not longer endure this, could not longer avoid their kicks. He halted in the middle of the paddock; his face expressed the repulsive, weak anger of helpless old age, and despair besides. He laid back his ears, and suddenly[2] something happened that caused all the horses suddenly[2] to become quiet. A very old mare, Viazopurikha, came up and sniffed the gelding, and sighed. The gelding also sighed. ....

* * * * * *

[1] *Dvor.*

[2] So in the original.

CHAPTER V

In the middle of the paddock, flooded with the moonlight, stood the tall, gaunt figure of the gelding, still wearing the high saddle with its prominent pommel. The horses, motionless and in deep silence, stood around him, as if they were learning something new and extraordinary from him. And, indeed, something new and extraordinary they learned from him.

This is what they learned from him. ....

* * * * * *

FIRST NIGHT

"Yes, I was sired by Liubezni I. Baba was my dam. According to the genealogy my name is Muzhik I. Muzhik I., I am according to my pedigree; but generally I am known as Kholstomer, on account of a long and glorious gallop, the like of which never took place in Russia. In lineage no horse in the world stands higher than I, for good blood. I would never have told you this. Why should I? You would never have known me, for not even Viazopurikha knew me, though she and I used to be together at Khrenovo, and it is only just now that she recognized me. You would not have believed me had it not been for Viazopurikha's witness, and I should never have told you this. I do not need the pity of my kind. But you insisted upon it. Well, I am that Kholstomer whom the amateurs are seeking for and cannot find, that Kholstomer whom the count himself named, and whom he let go from his stud because I outran his favorite 'Lebedi.' ....

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"When I was born I did not know what they meant when they called me a piebald;[1] I thought that I was a horse. The first remark made about my hide, I remember, deeply surprised me and my dam.

[1] *Pyegi.*

"I must have been foaled in the night. In the morning, licked clean by my dam's tongue, I stood on my legs. I remember I kept wanting something, and that everything seemed to me perfectly wonderful, and, at the same time, perfectly simple. Our stalls were in a long, warm corridor, with latticed gates, through which everything could be seen.

"My dam tempted me to suckle; but I was so innocent as yet that I bunted her with my nose, now under her fore legs, now under her udder. Suddenly my dam gazed at the latticed gate, and, throwing her leg over me, stepped to one side. The groom on duty was looking in at us through the lattice.

"'See, Baba has foaled!' he exclaimed, and began to draw the bolt. He came in over the straw bed, and took me up in his arms. 'Come and look, Taras!' he cried; 'see what a piebald colt, a perfect magpie!'

"I tore myself away from him, and fell on my knees.

"'See, a perfect little devil!' he said.

"My dam became disquieted; but she did not take my part, and merely drew a long, long breath, and stepped to one side. The grooms came, and began to look at me. One ran to tell the equerry.

"All laughed as they looked at my spotting, and gave me various odd names. I did not understand these names, nor did my dam either. Up to that time in all my family there had never been a single piebald known. We had no idea that there was anything disgraceful in it. And then all extolled my structure and strength.

"'See what a lively one!' said the hostler. 'You can't hold him.'

"In a little while came the equerry, and began to marvel at my coloring. He also seemed disgusted.

"'What a nasty beast!' he cried. 'The general will not keep him in the stud. Ekh! Baba, you have caused me much trouble,' he said, addressing my dam. 'You ought to have foaled a colt with a star, but this is completely piebald.'

"My dam made no reply, and, as always in such circumstances, merely sighed again.

"'What kind of a devil was his sire? A regular muzhik!' he went on to say. 'It is impossible to keep him in the stud; it's a shame! But we'll see, we'll see,' said he; and all said the same as they looked at me.

"After a few days the general himself came. He took a look at me, and again all seemed horror-struck, and scolded me and my mother also on account of my hide. 'But we'll see, we'll see," said every one, as soon as they caught sight of me.

"Until spring we young colts lived in separate stalls with our dams; only occasionally, when the snow on the roof of the sheds began to melt in the sun, they would let us out into the wide yard, spread with fresh straw. There for the first time I became acquainted with all my kin, near and remote. There I saw how from different doors issued all the famous mares of that time with their colts. There was the old Holland mare, Mushka, sired by Smetanka, Krasnukha, the saddle-horse Dobrokhotikha, all celebrities at that time. All, gathered together there with their colts, walked up and down in the sunshine, rolled over on the fresh straw, and sniffed of each other like ordinary horses.

"I cannot even now forget the sight of that paddock, full of the beauties of that day. It may seem strange to you to think of me as ever having been young and frisky, but I used to be. This very same Viazopurikha was there then, a yearling, whose mane had just been cut,[1] — a kind, jolly, frolicsome little horse. But let it not be taken as unkindly meant when I say that, though she is now considered a rarity among you on account of her pedigree, then she was only one of the meanest horses of that stud. She herself will corroborate this.

"Though my piebald coat displeased the men, it was exceedingly attractive to all the horses. They all came round me, expressing their delight, and frisking with me. I even began to forget the words of the men about my hide, and felt happy. But I soon experienced the first sorrow of my life, and the cause of it was my dam.

[1] All expressed in the word *strigunchik*.

As soon as it began to thaw, and the swallows chirped under the eaves, and the spring made itself felt more and more in the air, my dam began to change in her behavior toward me.

"Her whole nature was transformed. Suddenly, without any reason, she began to frisk, galloping around the yard, which certainly did not accord with her dignified growth; then she would pause and consider, and begin to whinny; then she would bite and kick her sister mares; then she began to smell of me, and neigh with dissatisfaction, then, trotting out into the sun she would lay her head across the shoulder of my two-year-old sister Kupchika, and long and earnestly scratch her back, and push me away from nursing her. One time the equerry came, commanded the halter to be put on her, and they led her out of the paddock. She whinnied; I replied to her, and darted after her, but she would not even look at me. The groom Taras seized me in both arms, just as they shut the door on my mother's retreating form.

"I struggled, threw the groom on the straw; but the door was closed, and I only heard my mother's whinnying growing fainter and fainter. And in this whinnying I perceived that she called not for me, but I perceived a very different expression. In reply to her voice, there was heard in the distance a mighty voice, as I afterward learned, the voice of Dobrui I., who, with two grooms in attendance, was about to be united once more with my dam.

"I don't remember how Taras got out of my stall; it was too grievous for me. I felt that I had forever lost my mother's love, and wholly because I was a piebald, I said to myself, remembering what the people said of my hide; and such passionate anger came over me, that I began to pound the sides of the stall with my head and feet, and I pounded them until the sweat poured from me, and I could not stand up from exhaustion.

"After some time my dame returned to me. I heard her as she came along the corridor in a prancing trot, wholly unusual to her, and entered our stall. The door

was opened for her. I did not recognize her, so much younger and handsomer had she grown. She snuffed at me, neighed, and began to snort. But in her whole expression I could see that she did not love me.

"She told me about the beauty of Dobrui and her love for him. These meetings continued, and the relations between my dam and me kept growing cooler and cooler.

"Soon they led us to pasture. I now began to experience new pleasures which consoled me for the loss of my mother's love. I had friends and companions. We learned together to eat grass, to neigh like the old horses, and to lift out tails and gallop in wide circles around our dams. This was a happy time. Everything was forgiven to me; all loved me and were loved by me, and looked indulgently on all that I did. This did not last long.

"Very soon something terrible happened to me."

The gelding sighed deeply, deeply, and moved aside from the horses.

The dawn was already far advanced. The gates creaked. Nester came. The horses scattered. The drover straightened the saddle on the gelding's back, and drove away the horses.

CHAPTER VI

SECOND NIGHT

As soon as the horses were driven in, they once more gathered around the piebald.

"In the month of August," continued the piebald horse, "I was separated from my mother, and I did not experience any unusual grief. I saw that she was already suckling a small brother — the famous Usan — and I was no longer what I had been before. I was not jealous, but I felt that I had become more than ever cool toward her. Besides, I knew that on leaving my mother I should be transferred to the general division of young horses, where we were stalled in twos and threes, and every day the whole herd went out to exercise.

"I was in one stall with Milui. Milui was a saddle-

horse, and afterward the emperor himself used to ride him, and he was represented in pictures and statuary. At that time he was a mere colt, with a shiny soft coat, a swanlike neck, and slender, straight legs. He was always lively, good-natured, and lovable; was always ready to frisk, and be caressed, and sport with either horse or man. He and I could not help being good friends, living together as we did; and our friendship lasted all the days of our youth. He was gay, and inclined to be giddy. Even then he began to feel the tender passion to disport with the fillies, and he used to make sport of my guilelessness. To my unhappiness, I myself, out of egotism, tried to follow his example, and very soon was in love. And this early inclination of mine was the cause, in great measure, of my fate. It happened that I was enamored..... Viazopurikha was older than I by a year; she and I were good friends, but toward the end of autumn I noticed that she began to avoid me.....

"But I am not going to relate all the story of my unhappy first love; she herself remembers my senseless passion, which ended for me in the most important change in my life.

"The hostlers came along, drove her away, and pounded me. In the evening they led me into a special stall. I whinnied the whole night long, as if with a presentiment of what was coming on the morrow.

"In the morning the general, the equerry, the under grooms, and the hostlers came into the corridor where my stall was, and set up a terrible screaming. The general screamed to the head groom; the groom justified himself, saying that he had not given orders to send me away, but that the under grooms had done it of their own free will. The general said that it had spoiled everything, but that it was impossible to keep young stallions. The head groom replied that he would have it attended to. They calmed down and went out. I did not understand it at all, but I perceived that something concerning me was under consideration.....

* * * * * *

"On the next day I had ceased forever to whinny; I became what I am now. All the light of my eyes was quenched. Nothing seemed sweet to me; I became self-absorbed, and began to be pensive. At first I felt indifferent to everything. I ceased even to eat, to drink, and to run; and all thought of sprightly sport was gone. Then it nevermore came into my mind to kick up my heels, to roll over, to whinny, without bringing up the terrible question, 'Why? for what purpose?' And my vigor died away.

"Once they led me out at eventide, at the time when they were driving the stud home from the field. From afar I saw already the cloud of dust in which could be barely distinguished the familiar lineaments of all of our dams. I heard the cheerful snorting, and the trampling of hoofs. I stopped short, though the halter-rope by which the groom held me cut my neck; and I gazed at the approaching drove as one gazes at a happiness which is lost forever and will never return again. They drew near, and my eyes fell upon forms so well known to me, — beautiful, grand, plump, full of life every one. Who among them all deigned to glance at me? I did not feel the pain which the groom in pulling the rope inflicted. I forgot myself, and involuntarily tried to whinny as of yore, and to gallop off; but my whinnying sounded melancholy, ridiculous, and unbecoming. Not one in the stud made sport of me, but I noticed that many of them from politeness turned away from me.

"It was evident that in their eyes I was despicable and pitiable, and worst of all, ridiculous. My slender, weakly neck, my big head, — I had become thin, — my long, thick legs, and the awkward gait that I struck up, in my old fashion, around the groom, all must have seemed absurd to them. No one heeded my attempted whinnying, all turned away from me.

"Suddenly I comprehended it all, comprehended how I was forever sundered from them, every one; and I know not how I stumbled home behind the groom.

"I had already shown a tendency toward gravity and thoughtfulness; but now a decided change came over

me. My spotted coat, which occasioned such a strange prejudice in men, my terrible and unexpected misfortune, and, moreover, my peculiarly isolated position in the stud — which I felt, but could never explain to myself — compelled me to turn my thoughts inward on myself. I pondered on the disgust that people showed when they berated me for being a piebald; I pondered on the inconstancy of maternal and of female affection in general, and its dependence on physical conditions; and, above all, I pondered on the characteristics of that strange race of mortals with whom we are so closely bound, and whom we call men, — those characteristics which were the source of the peculiarity of my position in the stud, felt by me but incomprehensible.

"The significance of this peculiarity, and of the human characteristics on which it was based, was discovered to me by the following incident: —

"It was winter, at Christmas-tide. All day long no fodder had been given to me, nor had I been led out to water. I afterward learned that this arose from our groom being drunk. On this day the equerry came to me, saw that I had no food, and began to use hard language about the missing groom, and went away.

"On the next day, the groom with his mates came out to our stalls to give us some hay. I noticed that he was especially pale and depressed, and in the expression of his long back there was a something significant and demanding sympathy.

"He angrily flung the hay behind the grating. I laid my head over his shoulder; but he struck me such a hard blow with his fist on the nose, that I started back. Then he kicked me in the belly with his boot.

"'If it had n't been for this scurvy beast,' said he, 'there would n't have been any trouble.'

"'Why?' asked another groom.

"'Mind you, he does n't come to inquire about the count's! But twice a day he comes out to look after his own.'

"'Have they given him the piebald?' inquired another.

"'Whether they 've given it to him or sold it to him,

the dog only knows! The count's might all die o' starvation — it would n't make any difference; but see how it upset him when I did n't give *his* horse his fodder! "Lie down!" says he, and then such a basting I got! No Christianity in it. More pity on the cattle than on a man. I don't believe he 's ever been christened; he himself counted the blows, the barbarian! The general did not use the whip so. He made my back all welts. There 's no soul of a Christian in him!'

"Now, what they said about whips and Christianity, I understood well enough; but it was perfectly dark to me as to the meaning of the words, *my* horse, *his* horse, by which I perceived that men understood some sort of bond between me and the groom. Wherein consisted this bond, I could not then understand at all. Only long afterward, when I was separated from the other horses, I came to learn what it meant. At that time I could not understand at all that it meant that they considered *me* the property of a man. To say *my* horse in reference to me, a live horse, seemed to me as strange as to say, *my earth*, *my atmosphere*, *my water.*

"But these words had a monstrous influence on me. I pondered on them ceaselessly; and only after long and varied relations with men did I come at last to comprehend the meaning that men find in these strange words.

"The meaning is this: Men rule in life, not by deeds, but by words. They love not so much the possibility of doing or not doing anything, as the possibility of talking about different objects in words agreed on between them. Such words, considered very important among them, are the words, *my*, *mine*, *ours*, which they employ for various things, beings, and objects; even for the earth, people, and horses. In regard to any particular thing, they agree that only one person shall say, 'It is *mine*.' And he who in this play, which they engage in, can say *mine* in regard to the greatest number of things, is considered the most fortunate among them. Why this is so, I know not; but it is so. Long before, I had tried to explain this to my satisfaction,

by some direct advantage; but it seemed that I was wrong.

"Many of the men who, for instance, called me their horse, did not ride on me, but entirely different men rode on me. They themselves did not feed me, but entirely different people fed me. Again, it was not those who called me their horse who treated me kindly, but the coachman, the veterinary, and, as a general thing, outside men.

"Afterward, as I widened the sphere of my experiences, I became convinced that the concept *my*, as applied not only to us horses, but to other things, has no other foundation than a low and animal, a human instinct, which they call the sentiment or right of property. Man says, *my house*, and never lives in it, but is only cumbered with the building and maintenance of it. The merchant says, *my shop*, — my clothing-shop, for example, — and he does not even wear clothes made of the best cloth in his shop.

"There are people who call land theirs, and have never seen their land, and have never been on it. There are men who call other people theirs, but have never seen these people; and the whole relationship of these owners, to these people, consists in doing them harm.

"There are men who call women theirs, — their wives or mistresses; but these women live with other men. And men struggle in life not to do what they consider good, but to call as many things as possible their own.

"I am convinced now that herein lies the substantial difference between men and us. And, therefore, not speaking of other things where we are superior to men, we are able boldly to say that in this one respect at least we stand, in the scale of living beings, higher than men. The activity of men — at all events, of those with whom I have had to do — is guided by words; ours, by deeds.

"And here the equerry obtained this right to say about me, *my horse;* and hence he lashed the hostler. This discovery deeply disturbed me; and these thoughts

and opinions which my variegated coat aroused in men, and the thoughtfulness aroused in me by the change in my dam, together subserved to make me into that solemn and contemplative gelding that I am.

"I was threefold unhappy: I was piebald; I was a gelding; and men imagined that I did not belong to God and myself, as is the prerogative of every living thing, but that I belonged to the equerry.

"The consequences of their imagining this about me were many. The first was that they kept me apart from the others, fed me better, led me with a thong more frequently, and harnessed me up earlier. They harnessed me first when I was in my third year. I remember the first time; the equerry himself, who imagined that I was his, began, with a crowd of grooms, to harness me, expecting from me some ebullition of temper or contrariness. They put leather straps on me, and conducted me into the stalls. They laid on my back a wide leather cross, and attached it to the thills, so that I should not kick; but I was only waiting an opportunity to show my gait, and my love for work.

"They marveled because I went like an old horse. They began to drive me, and I began to practise trotting. Every day I had greater and greater success, so that in three months the general himself, and many others, praised my gait. But this was a strange thing: for the very reason that they imagined that I was the equerry's, and not theirs, my gait had for them an entirely different significance.

"The stallions, my brothers, were put through their paces; their time was reckoned; people came to see them; they were driven in gilded drozhskies. Costly saddles were put upon them. But I was driven in the equerry's simple drozhskies when he had business at Chesmenko and other manor-houses. All this resulted from the fact that I was piebald, but more than all from the fact that I was, according to their idea, not the property of the count, but of the equerry.

"To-morrow, if we are alive, I will tell you what a

serious influence on me was exercised by this right of proprietorship which the equerry arrogated to himself."

All that day the horses treated Kholstomer with great consideration. But Nester's behavior toward him was as rough as ever. The muzhik's gray stallion, coming toward the drove, whinnied; and again the chestnut filly coquettishly replied to him.

CHAPTER VII

THIRD NIGHT

THE new moon was in the sky, and her narrow sickle poured a mild light on Kholstomer, standing in the middle of the yard; the horses had clustered around him.

"The principal and most surprising consequence to me of the fact that I was not the count's property nor God's, but was the equerry's," continued the piebald, "was that what constitutes our chief activity — the mettlesome race — was made the cause of my banishment. They were driving Lebedi around the ring; and a jockey from Chesmenko was riding me, and entered the course. Lebedi dashed past us. He trotted well, but he seemed to want to show off. He had not that skill which I had cultivated in myself; that is, of compelling one leg instantly to follow on the motion of the other, and not to waste the least degree of energy, but use it all in pressing forward. Lebedi dashed by us. I dashed into the ring; the jockey did not hold me back.

"'Say, will you time my piebald?' he cried; and, when Lebedi came abreast of us a second time, he let me out. Lebedi had the advantage of his momentum, and so I was left behind in the first heat; but in the second I began to gain on him; came up to him, — he was in a drozhsky, — caught up with him, passed beyond him, and won the race. They tried it a second time — the same thing. I was the swifter. And this filled.

them all with dismay. The general begged them to send me away as soon as possible, so that I might not be heard of again. 'Otherwise the count will know about it, and there will be trouble,' said he. And they sent me to the horse-dealer. I did not remain there long. A hussar, who came along to get a remount, bought me. All this had been so unfair, so cruel, that I was glad when they took me from Khrenovaya, and forever separated me from all that had been near and dear to me. It was too hard for me among them. Before *them* stood love, honor, freedom; before me labor, humiliation, — humiliation, labor, to the end of my days. Why? Because I was piebald, and because I was compelled to be somebody's horse." ....

Kholstomer could not tell any more of his story that evening. In the paddock an event took place which filled all the horses with dismay. Kupchikha, a mare who had been overlong with foal and had at first been listening to Kholstomer's story, got up and went slowly over to the shelter of the shed, and there began to scream so piercingly that she attracted the attention of all the horses; then she lay down, then she got up again, then she lay down again. The old dams all understood what was her trouble, but the younger horses became greatly excited, and, leaving the gelding by himself, they went and stood around her.

By morning there was a new colt born, and it stood unsteadily on its legs. Nester shouted to the groom, and they took the dam and her little one to the stall, and separated them from the other horses.

CHAPTER VIII

FOURTH NIGHT

The next evening, when the gates were closed and all was still, the piebald continued thus: —

"I had many experiences, both among men and among my own kind, while changing about from hand to hand.

I stayed with two masters the longest: with a prince, an officer of hussars, and then with an old man who lived at Nikola Yavlennui Church.

"I spent the happiest days of my life with the hussar.

"Though he was the cause of my destruction, though he loved nothing and nobody, yet I loved him, and still love him, for this very reason.

"He pleased me precisely because he was handsome, fortunate, rich, and therefore loved no one.

"You understand this lofty equine sentiment of ours. His coldness, and my dependence on him, added greatly to the strength of my affection for him. 'Beat me, drive me to death,' I used to think in those happy days; 'for that very reason I shall be all the happier.'

"He bought me of the horse-dealer to whom the equerry had sold me, for eight hundred rubles. He bought me because there was no demand for piebald horses. Those were my happiest days.

"He had a mistress. I knew it because every day I took him to her; and I took her out driving, and sometimes took them together.

"His mistress was a handsome woman, and he was handsome, and his coachman was handsome; and I loved them all because they were. And life was worth living then.

"This is the way my life was spent: In the morning the groom came to rub me down, — not the coachman, but the groom. The groom was a young lad, taken from among the muzhiks. He would open the door, let the wind drive out the steam from the horses, shovel out the manure, take off the blanket, begin to flourish the brush over my body, and with the currycomb to brush out the rolls of sweaty hair on the floor of the stall, marked by the stamping of hoofs. I would make believe bite his sleeves, would push him with my leg.

"Then we were led out, one after the other, to drink from a tub of cold water; and the youngster admired my sleek, spotted coat, which he had polished, my legs straight as an arrow, my broad hoofs, my glossy flank, and back wide enough to sleep on. Then he would

throw the hay behind the broad rack, and pour the oats into the oaken cribs. Then Feofan and the old coachman would come.

"The master and the coachman were alike. Neither the one nor the other feared any one or loved any one except themselves, and therefore everybody loved them. Feofan came in a red shirt, plush breeches, and coat. I used to like to hear him when, all pomaded for a holiday, he would come to the stable in his coat, and cry, —

"'Well, you beast, are you asleep?' and poke me in the loin with the handle of his fork; but never so as to hurt, only in fun. I could instantly take a joke, and I would lay back my ears and show my teeth.

"We had a chestnut stallion which belonged to a pair. Sometimes at night they would harness us together. This Polkan could not understand a joke, and was simply ugly as the devil. I used to stand in the next stall to him, and seriously quarrel. Feofan was not afraid of him. He used to go straight up to him, shout to him, — it seemed as if he were going to kick him, — but no, straight by, and put on the halter.

"Once we ran away together, in a pair, down over the Kuznetskoye. Neither the master nor the coachman was frightened; they laughed, they shouted to the people, and they sawed on the reins and pulled up, and so I did not run over anybody.

"In their service I wasted my best qualities, and half of my life. There they gave me too much water to drink, and spoilt my legs. ....

"But, in spite of everything, that was the best part of my life. At twelve o'clock they would come, harness me, oil my hoofs, moisten my forelock and mane, and put me between the thills.

"The sledge was of cane, plaited, upholstered in velvet. The harness had little silver buckles, the reins were of silk, and once I wore a fly-net. The whole harness was such that, when all the straps and belts were put on and drawn, it was impossible to make out where the harness ended and the horse began. They would finish harnessing in the shed. Feofan would

come out, his middle wider that his shoulders, with his red girdle up under his arms. He would inspect the harness, take his seat, straighten his kaftan, put his foot in the stirrup, get off some joke, always crack his whip, though he scarcely ever touched me with it, — merely for form's sake, — and cry, 'Now off with you!'[1] And, frisking at every step, I would prance out of the gate; and the cook, coming out to empty her dishwater, would pause in the road; and the muzhik, bringing in his firewood, would open his eyes. We would drive up and down, occasionally stopping. The lackeys come out, the coachmen drive up. And conversation would not flag. Always kept waiting. Sometimes for three hours we were kept at the door; occasionally we take a turn around, and talk awhile, and again we would halt.

"At last there would be a tumult in the hallway; out would come the gray-haired Tikhon, with his paunch, in his dress-coat — 'Drive on;' then there was none of that feeble way of saying, 'Go ahead,' as if I did not know that we were going forward and not backward. Feofan would cluck and drive up to the door, and the prince would come out quickly, unconcernedly, as if there was nothing wonderful either in this sledge or the horses, or Feofan himself, as he bends his back and holds out his hands in such a way that it would seem impossible to keep it up long.

"The prince comes out in his shako and cloak, with a gray beaver collar concealing his ruddy face, with its black brows, a handsome face, which ought never to be covered. He would come out with clanking saber, jingling spurs, and copper-heeled boots; stepping over the carpet apparently in a hurry, and not paying any heed to me or to Feofan, whom everybody except himself looked at and admired.

"Feofan clucks. I tug at the reins, and with a respectable rapid trot we are off and away. I glance round at the prince, and toss my aristocratic head and delicate topknot. ....

"The prince is in good spirits; he sometimes jests with

[1] *Pushchaï.*

Feofan. Feofan replies, half turning round to the prince his handsome face, and, not dropping his hands, makes an almost imperceptible motion with the reins which I understand: and on, on, on, with ever wider and wider strides, straining every muscle, and sending the muddy snow over the dasher, off I go! Then there was none of the absurd way that obtains to-day of crying 'Oh!' as if the coachman were in pain, and could n't speak. 'G' long! Look out there![1] G' long! Look out there,' shouts Feofan; and the people clear the way, and stand craning their necks to see the handsome gelding, the handsome coachman, and the handsome barin. ....

"I loved specially to outstrip some racer. When Feofan and I would see in the distance some team worthy of our mettle, flying like a whirlwind, we would gradually come nearer and nearer to him. And soon, tossing the mud over the dasher, I would be even with the passenger, and would snort over his head, then even with the saddle, with the bell-bow;[2] then I would already see him and hear him behind me, gradually getting farther and farther away. But the prince and Feofan and I, we all kept silent, and made believe that we were merely out for a drive, and by our actions that we did not notice those with slow horses whom we overtook on our way. I loved to race, but I loved also to meet a good racer. One wink, sound, glance, and we would be off, and would fly along, each on his own side of the road."....

Here the gates creaked, and the voices of Nester and Vaska were heard.

CHAPTER IX

FIFTH NIGHT

The weather began to change. The sky was overcast; and in the morning there was no dew, but it was warm, and the flies were sticky. As soon as the herd

[1] *Podi! beregeis.* [2] *Duga.*

was driven in, the horses gathered around the piebald, and thus he finished his story: —

"The happy days of my life were soon ended. I lived so only two years. At the end of the second winter, there happened an event which was most delightful to me, and immediately after came my deepest sorrow. It was at Shrove-tide. I took the prince to the races. Atlasnui and Buichok also ran in the race.

"I don't know what they were doing in the summer-house; but I know that he came, and ordered Feofan to enter the ring. I remember they drove me into the ring, stationed me, and stationed Atlasnui. Atlasnui was in racing gear, but I was harnessed in a city sleigh. At the turning stake I left him behind. A laugh and a cry of victory greeted my achievement.

"When they began to lead me around, a crowd followed after, and a man offered the prince five thousand. He only laughed, showing his white teeth.

"'No,' said he, 'this is n't a horse, it 's a friend. I would n't sell him for a mountain of gold. Good day, gentlemen!'[1]

"He threw open the fur robes, and got in.

"'To Ostozhenko.'

"That was where his mistress lived. And we flew. ....

"It was our last happy day. We reached her home. He called her *his*. But she loved some one else, and had gone off with him. The prince ascertained this at her room. It was five o'clock; and, not letting me be unharnessed, he started in pursuit of her. It had never happened before; they applied the knout to me, and made me gallop. For the first time, I began to flag, and, I am ashamed to say, I wanted to rest.

"But suddenly I heard the prince himself shouting in an unnatural voice, 'Hurry up!'[2] and the knout whistled and cut me; and I dashed ahead again, my leg hitting against the iron of the dasher. We overtook her, after going twenty-five versts. I got him there; but I trembled all night, and could not eat anything. In the

[1] *Da svidanya = au revoir.* [2] *Valyaï!*

morning they gave me water. I drank it, and forever ceased to be the horse that I had been. I was sick. They tortured me and maimed me, — treated me as men are accustomed to do. My hoofs came off. I had abscesses, and my legs grew bent. I had no strength in my chest. Laziness and weakness were everywhere apparent. I was sent to the horse-dealer. He fed me on carrots and other things, and made me something quite unlike my old self, but yet capable of deceiving one who did not know. But there was no strength and no swiftness in me.

"Moreover, the horse-dealer tormented me, by coming to my stall when customers were on hand, and beginning to stir me up, and torture me with a great knout so that it drove me to madness. Then he would wipe the bloody foam off the whip, and lead me out.

"An old lady bought me of the dealer. She used to keep coming to Nikola Yavlennui, and she used to whip the coachman. The coachman would come and weep in my stall. And I knew that his tears had an agreeable salt taste. Then the old woman died. Her overseer [1] took me into the country, and sold me to a peddler; then I was fed on wheat, and grew sicker still. I was sold to a muzhik. There I had to plow, had almost nothing to eat, and I cut my leg with a plowshare. I became sick again. A gipsy got possession of me. He tortured me horribly, and at last I was sold to the overseer here. And here I am." ....

All were silent. The rain began to fall.

CHAPTER X

As the herd returned home the following evening, they met the master [2] and a guest. Zhulduiba, leading the way, cast her eyes on two men's figures: one was the young master in a straw hat; the other a tall, stout, military man with wrinkled face. The old mare gazed at the man, and swerving went near to him; the rest, the younger ones,

[1] *Priskashchik.* [2] *Khozhyaïn.*

were thrown into some confusion, huddled together, especially when the master and his guest came directly into the midst of the horses, making gestures to each other, and talking.

"Here's this one. I bought it of Voyeïkof, — the dapple-gray horse," said the master.

"And that young black mare, with the white legs, — where did you get her? Fine one," said the guest.

They examined many of the horses as they walked around, or stood on the field. They remarked also the chestnut mare. "That's one of the saddle-horses, — the breed of Khrenovsky."

They quietly gazed at all the horses as they went by. The master shouted to Nester; and the old man, hastily digging his heels into the sides of the piebald, trotted out. The piebald horse hobbled along, limping on one leg; but his gait was such that it was evident that in other circumstances he would not have complained, even if he had been compelled to go in this way, as long as his strength held out, to the world's end. He was ready even to go at full gallop, and at first even broke into one.

"I have no hesitation in saying that there is n't a better horse in Russia than that one," said the master, pointing to one of the mares. The guest corroborated this praise. The master, full of satisfaction, walked up and down, made observations, and told the story and pedigree of each of the horses.

It was apparently somewhat of a bore to the guest to listen to the master; but he devised questions to make it seem as if he were interested in it.

"Yes, yes," said he, in some confusion.

"Look," said the host, not replying to the questions, "look at those legs, look. .... She cost me dear, but I shall have a three-year-old from her that 'll go!"

"Does she trot well?" asked the guest.

Thus they scrutinized almost all the horses, and there was nothing more to show. And they were silent.

"Well, shall we go?"

"Yes, let us go."

They went out through the gate. The guest was glad that the exhibition was over, and that he was going home, where he would eat, drink, smoke, and have a good time. As they went by Nester, who was sitting on the piebald and waiting for further orders, the guest struck his big fat hand on the horse's side.

"Here 's good blood," said he. "He 's like the piebald horse, if you remember, that I told you about."

The master perceived that it was not of his horses that the guest was speaking; and he did not listen, but, looking around, continued to gaze at his stud.

Suddenly, at his very ear, was heard a dull, weak, senile neigh. It was the piebald horse that began to neigh, but could not finish it. Becoming, as it were, confused, he broke short off.

Neither the guest nor the master paid any attention to this neigh, but went home. Kholstomer had recognized in the wrinkled old man his beloved former master, the once brilliant, handsome, and wealthy Sierpukhovskoï.

CHAPTER XI

* * * * * *

The rain continued to fall. In the paddock it was gloomy, but at the manor-house[1] it was quite the reverse. The luxurious evening meal was spread in the luxurious dining-room. At the table sat master, mistress, and the guest who had just arrived.

The mistress of the house, in a delicate condition, as any one could see by her shape, and by the way she sat, by her plumpness, and especially by her eyes, which had a sweet introspection and serious look in them, was in her place behind the samovar.

The master held in his hand a box of specially fine decennial cigars, such as no one else had, according to

[1] *Barski dom.*

his story, and proceeded to offer them to the guest. The master was a handsome young man of twenty-five, fresh, neatly dressed, smoothly brushed. He was dressed in a fresh, loosely fitting suit of clothes, made in London. On his watch-chain were big expensive charms. His cuff-buttons were of gold, large, even massive, set with turquoises. His beard was *à la Napoléon III.;* and his mustaches were waxed, and stood out in the way that is acquired nowhere else than in Paris.

The lady wore a silk-muslin dress, brocaded with large variegated flowers; on her head, large gold hairpins in her thick auburn hair, which was beautiful, though not entirely her own. Her hands were adorned with many bracelets and rings, all expensive.

The samovar was silver, the service exquisite. The lackey, magnificent in his dress-coat and white waistcoat and necktie, stood like a statue at the door, awaiting orders. The furniture was of bent wood, and bright; the wall-papers dark with large flowers. Around the table tinkled a cunning little dog, with a silver collar bearing an extremely hard English name, which neither of them could pronounce because they knew not English.

In the corner, among the flowers, stood the pianoforte, inlaid with mother-of-pearl.[1] Everything breathed of newness, luxury, and rarity. Everything was extremely fine; but it all bore a peculiar impress of profusion, wealth, and an absence of intellectual interests.

The master was a great lover of racing, strong and hot-headed; one of those whom one meets everywhere, who drive out in sable furs, send costly bouquets to actresses, drink the most expensive wine, of the very latest brand, at the most expensive restaurant, offer prizes in their own names, and entertain the most expensive of ....

The newcomer, Nikita Sierpukhovskoĭ, was a man of forty years, tall, stout, bald, with huge mustaches and side-whiskers. He ought to have been very hand-

[1] *Incrusté.*

some; but it was evident that he had wasted his forces — physical and moral and pecuniary.

He was so deeply in debt that he was obliged to go into the service so as to escape the sponging-house. He had now come to the government city as chief of the imperial stud. His influential relations had obtained this for him.

He was dressed in an army kittel and blue trousers. His kittel and trousers were such as only those who are rich can afford to wear; so with his linen also. His watch was English. His boots had peculiar soles, as thick as a finger.

Nikita Sierpukhovskoï had squandered a fortune of two millions, and was still in debt to the amount of one hundred and twenty thousand rubles. From such a course there always remains a certain momentum of life, giving credit, and the possibility of living almost luxuriously for another ten years.

The ten years had already passed, and the momentum was finished; and it had become hard for him to live. He had already begun to drink too much; that is, to get fuddled with wine, which had never been the case with him before. Properly speaking, he had never begun and never finished drinking.

More noticeable in him than all else was the restlessness of his eyes (they had begun to wander), and the uncertainty of his intonations and motions. This restlessness was surprising, from the fact that it was evidently a new thing in him, because it could be seen that he had been accustomed, all his life long, to fear nothing and nobody, and that now he endured severe sufferings from some dread which was thoroughly alien to his nature.

The host and hostess[1] remarked this, exchanged glances, showing that they understood each other, postponed until they should get to bed the consideration of this subject, and, evidently, merely endured poor Sierpukhovskoï.

The sight of the young master's happiness humiliated

[1] *Khozyaïn* and *khozyaïka.*

Nikita, and compelled him to painful envy, as he remembered his own irrevocable past.

"You don't object to cigars, Marie?" he asked, addressing the lady in that peculiar tone, acquired only by practice, full of urbanity and friendliness, but not wholly satisfactory, — such as men who know the world use addressing women who are mistresses rather than wives. Not that he could have wished to insult her; on the contrary, he was much more anxious to gain her good-will and that of the host, though he would not for anything have acknowledged it to himself. But he had long been used to talking thus with such women. He knew that she would have been astonished, even affronted, if he had behaved to her as toward a lady. Moreover, it was necessary for him to preserve that peculiar shade of deference for the acknowledged wife of his friend. He treated such women always with consideration, not because he shared those so-called convictions that are promulgated in newspapers (he never read such trash), about esteem as the prerogative of every man, about the absurdity of marriage, etc., but because all well-bred men act thus, and he was a well-bred man, though inclined to drink.

He took a cigar. But his host awkwardly seized a handful of cigars, and placed them before the guest.

"No, just see how good these are! try them."

Nikita pushed away the cigars with his hand, and in his eyes flashed something like resentment and shame.

"Thanks," — he took out his cigar-case, — "try mine."

The lady had tact. She perceived how it affected him. She began hastily to talk with him.

"I am very fond of cigars. I should smoke myself if everybody about me did not smoke."

And she gave him one of her bright, kindly smiles. He half smiled in reply. Two of his teeth were gone.

"No, take this," continued the host, who had not tact. "Those others are not so strong. *Fritz, bringen Sie noch eine Kasten,*" he said, "*dort zwei.*"

The German lackey brought another box.

"Do you like these larger ones? They are stronger. This is a very good kind. Take them all," he added, continuing to force them upon his guest.

He was evidently glad that there was some one on whom he could lavish his rarities, and he saw nothing out of the way in it. Sierpukhovskoï began to smoke, and hastened to take up the subject that had been dropped.

"How much did you have to go on Atlasnui?" he asked.

"He cost me dear, — not less than five thousand, but at all events I am secured. Plenty of colts, I tell you!"

"Do they trot?" inquired Sierpukhovskoï.

"First-rate. To-day Atlasnui's colt took three prizes: one at Tula, one at Moscow, and one at Petersburg. He raced with Voyeïkof's Voronui. The rascally jockey made four abatements, and almost put him out of the race."

"He was rather raw; too much Dutch stock in him, I should say," said Sierpukhovskoï.

"Well, but the mares are finer ones. I will show you to-morrow. I paid three thousand for Dobruina, two thousand for Laskovaya."

And again the host began to enumerate his wealth. The mistress saw that this was hard for Sierpukhovskoï, and that he only pretended to listen.

"Won't you have some more tea?" asked the hostess.

"I don't care for any more," said the host, and he went on with his story. She got up; the host detained her, took her in his arms, and kissed her.

Sierpukhovskoï smiled at first, as he looked at them, but his smile seemed to them unnatural; but when his host got up, and threw his arms round her, and went out with her as far as the *portière*, his face suddenly changed; he sighed deeply, and an expression of despair took possession of his wrinkled face. There was also wrath in it.

The host returned, and smiled as he sat down opposite Nikita. Neither of them spoke.

CHAPTER XII

"YES, you said that you bought him of Voyeĭkof," said Sierpukhovskoĭ, with assumed indifference.

"Oh, yes! I was speaking of Atlasnui. I had a great mind to buy the mares of Dubovitsky. Nothing but rubbish was left."

"He was *burned* out," said Sierpukhovskoĭ, and suddenly stood up and looked around. He remembered that he owed this ruined man twenty thousand rubles, and that, if *burned* out were said of any one, it might by good rights be said about himself. He began to laugh.

Both preserved a long silence. The host was revolving in his mind how he might boast a little before his guest. Sierpukhovskoĭ was cogitating how he might show that he did not consider himself burned out. But the thoughts of both moved with difficulty, in spite of the fact that they tried to enliven themselves with cigars.

"Well, when shall we have something to drink, I wonder?" said Sierpukhovskoĭ to himself.

"At all events, we must have something to drink, else I shall die of the blues with him," said the host to himself.

"How is it? are you going to stay here long?" asked Sierpukhovskoĭ.

"About a month longer. Shall we have a little lunch? What say you? Fritz, is everything ready?"

They went back to the dining-room. There, under a hanging lamp, stood the table loaded with candles and very extraordinary things: siphons, and bottles with fancy stoppers, extraordinary wine in decanters, extraordinary liqueurs and vodka. They drank, sat down, drank again, sat down, and tried to talk. Sierpukhovskoĭ grew flushed, and began to speak unreservedly.

They talked about women: who kept such and such an one; the gipsy, the ballet-girl, the *soubrette*.[1]

"Why, you left Mathieu, did n't you?" asked the host.

This was the mistress who had caused Sierpukhovskoï's ruin.

"No, she left me. Oh, brother, how one remembers what one has squandered in life! Now I am glad, fact, when I get a thousand rubles; glad, fact, when I get out of everybody's way. I cannot in Moscow. Ah! what 's to be said!"

The host was bored to listen to Sierpukhovskoï. He wanted to talk about himself, — to brag. But Sierpukhovskoï also wanted to talk about himself, — about his brilliant past. The host poured out some more wine, and waited till he had finished, so as to tell him about his affairs, — how he was going to arrange his stud as no one ever had before; and how Marie loved him, not for his money, but for himself.

"I was going to tell you that in my stud...." he began. But Sierpukhovskoï interrupted him.

"There was a time, I may say," he began, "when I loved, and knew how to live. You were talking just now about racing; please tell me what is your best racer."

The host was glad of the chance to tell some more about his stud, but Sierpukhovskoï again interrupted him.

"Yes, yes," said he. "But the trouble with you breeders is that you do it only for ostentation, and not for pleasure, for life. It was n't so with me. I was telling you this very day that I used to have a piebald racer, with just such spots as I saw among your colts. Oh! what a horse he was! You can't imagine it; this was in '42. I had just come to Moscow. I went to a dealer, and saw a piebald gelding. All in best form. He pleased me. Price? Thousand rubles. He pleased me. I took him, and began to ride him. I never had, and you never had, and never will have, such a horse. I never

[1] *Frantsuzhenka*, the little Frenchwoman.

knew a better horse, either for gait, or strength, or beauty. You were a lad then. You could not have known, but you may have heard, I suppose. All Moscow knew him."

"Yes, I heard about him," said the host, reluctantly. "But I was going to tell you about my...."

"So you heard about him. I bought him just as he was, without pedigree, without proof; but then I knew Voyeïkof, and I traced him. He was sired by Liubeznuï I. He was called Kholstomer.[1] He'd measure linen for you! On account of his spotting, he was given to the equerry at the Khrenovski stud; and he had him gelded and sold him to the dealer. There are n't horses like him any more, friend! Ah! what a time that was! Ah! vanished youth!" he said, quoting the words of a gipsy song. He began to get wild. "Eh! that was a golden time! I was twenty-five. I had eighty thousand a year income; then I had n't a gray hair; all my teeth like pearls. .... Whatever I undertook prospered. And yet all came to an end." ....

"Well, you did n't have such lively races then," said the host, taking advantage of the interruption. "I tell you that my first horses began to run without...."

"Your horses! Horses were more mettlesome then...."

"How more mettlesome?"

"Yes, more mettlesome. I remember how one time I was at Moscow at the races. None of my horses were in it. I did not care for racing; but I had blooded horses, General Chaulet, Mahomet. I had my piebald with me. My coachman was a splendid young fellow. I liked him. But he was rather given to drink, so I drove. 'Sierpukhovskoï,' said they, 'when are you going to get some trotters?' — 'I don't care for your low-bred beasts,[2] the devil take 'em! I have a hack-driver's piebald that 's worth all of yours.' — 'Yes, but he does n't race.' — 'I 'll bet you a thousand rubles.' They took me up. He went round in five seconds, won the wager of a thousand rubles. But that was nothing.

[1] *Kholstomer* means a cloth-measurer; suggesting the greatest distance from finger to finger of the outstretched arms, and rapidity in accomplishing the motion.

[2] Literally, *muzhiks*.

With my blooded horses I went in a troïka a hundred versts in three hours. All Moscow knew about it."

And Sierpukhovskoï began to brag so fluently and steadily that the host could not get in a word, and sat facing him with dejected countenance. Only, by way of diversion, he would fill up his glass and that of his companion.

It began already to grow light, but still they sat there. It became painfully tiresome to the host. He got up.

"Sleep, — let's go to sleep, then," said Sierpukhovskoï, as he got up, and went staggering and puffing to the room that had been assigned to him.

* * * * * *

The master of the house rejoined his mistress.

"Oh, he's unendurable. He got drunk, and lied faster than he could talk."

"And he made love to me, too."

"I fear that he's going to beg some money of me."

Sierpukhovskoï threw himself on the bed without undressing, and drew a long breath.

"I must have talked a good deal of nonsense," he thought. "Well, it's all the same. Good wine, but he's a big hog. Something cheap about him.[1] And I am a great hog myself," he remarked, and laughed aloud. "Well, I used to support others; now it's my turn. Perhaps the Winkler girl will help me. I'll borrow some money of her. He may come to it. I suppose I've got to undress. Can't get my boot off. Hey, hey!" he cried; but the man who had been ordered to wait on him had long before gone to bed.

He sat up, took off his kittel and his vest, and somehow managed to crawl out of his trousers; but it was long before his boots would stir; with his stout belly it was hard work to stoop over. He got one off; he struggled and struggled with the other, got out of breath, and gave it up. And so with one leg in the boot he threw himself down, and began to snore, filling the whole room with the odor of wine, tobacco, and vile old age.

[1] *Kupecheskoye*, merchant-like.

CHAPTER XIII

If Kholstomer remembered anything that night, it was the frolic that Vaska gave him. He threw over him a blanket, and galloped off. He was left till morning at the door of a tavern, with a muzhik's horse. They licked each other. In the morning he went back to the herd, and itched all over.

"Something makes me itch fearfully," he thought.

Five days passed. They brought a veterinary. He said cheerfully: —

"The mange. You'll have to dispose of him to the gipsies."

"Better have his throat cut; only have it done to-day."

The morning was calm and clear. The herd had gone to pasture. Kholstomer remained behind. A strange man came along, thin, dark, dirty, in a kaftan spotted with something black. This was the knacker. He took Kholstomer by the halter, and without looking at him started off. The horse followed quietly, not looking round, and, as always, dragging his legs and kicking up the straw with his hind legs.

As he went out of the gate, he turned his head toward the well; but the knacker twitched the halter, and said:

"It's not worth while."

The knacker and Vaska, who followed, proceeded to a depression behind the brick barn, and stopped, as if there was something peculiar in this most ordinary place; and the knacker, handing the halter to Vaska, took off his kaftan, rolled up his sleeves, and produced a knife and whetstone from his boot-leg.

The piebald pulled at the halter, and out of sheer *ennui* tried to bite it, but it was too far off. He sighed, and closed his eyes. His lip hung down, showing his worn yellow teeth, and he began to drowse, lulled by the sound of the knife on the stone. Only his sick and swollen leg trembled a little.

Suddenly he felt that he was grasped by the lower

jaw, and that his head was lifted up. He opened his eyes. Two dogs were in front of him. One was snuffing in the direction of the knacker, the other sat looking at the gelding as if he were expecting something especially from him. The gelding looked at them, and began to rub his jaw against the hand that held him.

"Of course they want to cure me," he said; "let it come!"

And the thought had hardly passed through his mind, before they did something to his throat. It hurt him; he started back, stamped his foot, but restrained himself, and waited for what was to follow. .... What followed, was some liquid pouring in a stream down his neck and breast. He drew a deep breath, lifting his sides. And it seemed easier, much easier, to him.

The whole burden of his life was taken from him.

He closed his eyes, and began to droop his head, — no one held it. Then his legs quivered, his whole body swayed. He was not so much terrified as he was astonished. ....

Everything was so new. He was astonished; he tried to run ahead, up the hill, ... but, instead of this, his legs, moving where he stood, interfered. He began to roll over on his side, and, while expecting to make a step, he fell forward, and on his left side.

The knacker waited till the death-struggle was over, drove away the dogs which were creeping nearer, and then seized the horse by the legs, turned him over on the back, and, commanding Vaska to hold his leg, began to take off the hide.

"That was a horse indeed!" said Vaska.

"If he'd been fatter, it would have been a fine hide," said the knacker.

That evening the herd passed by the hill; and those who were on the left wing saw a red object below them, and around it some dogs busily romping, and crows and hawks flying over it. One dog, with his paws on the carcass, and shaking his head, was growling over what he was tearing with his teeth. The brown filly stopped,

lifted her head and neck, and long sniffed the air. It took force to drive her away.

At sunset, in a ravine of the ancient forest, in the bottom of an overgrown glade, some large-headed wolf-whelps were beside themselves with joy. There were five of them, — four about of a size, and one little one with a head bigger than his body. A lean, hairless she-wolf, her belly with hanging dugs almost touching the ground, crept out of the bushes, and sat down in front of the wolves. The wolves sat in a semicircle in front of her. She went to the smallest, and, lowering her stumpy tail, and bending her snout to the ground, made a few convulsive motions, and, opening her jaws filled with teeth, she struggled, and disgorged a great piece of horse-flesh.

The larger whelps made a movement to seize it; but she restrained them with a threatening growl, and let the little one have it all.

The little one, as if in anger, seized the morsel, hiding it under him, and began to devour it. Then the she-wolf disgorged for the second, and the third, and in the same way for all five, and finally lay down in front of them to rest.

At the end of a week there lay behind the brick barn only the great skull, and two shoulder-blades; all the rest had disappeared. In the summer a muzhik who gathered up the bones carried off also the skull and shoulder-blades, and put them to use.

The dead body of Sierpukhovskoï, who had been about in the world, and had eaten and drunken, was buried long after. Neither his skin nor his flesh nor his bones were of any use.

And just as his dead body, which had been about in the world, had been a great burden to others for twenty years, so the disposal of this body became only an additional charge on men. Long it had been useless to every one, long it had been only a burden. But still the dead who bury their dead found it expedient to dress this soon-to-be-decaying, swollen body in a fine uniform, in fine boots; to place it in a fine new coffin,

with new tassels on the four corners; then to place this new coffin in another, made of lead, and carry it to Moscow; and there to dig up the bones of people long buried, and then to lay away this malodorous body devoured by worms, in its new uniform and polished boots, and to cover the whole with earth.

ATWATER KENT RADIO ARTIST

REINALD WERRENRATH